THE MAGAZINE FOR WRESTLING FANS

APRIL
1962 / 50¢

Wrestling REVUE

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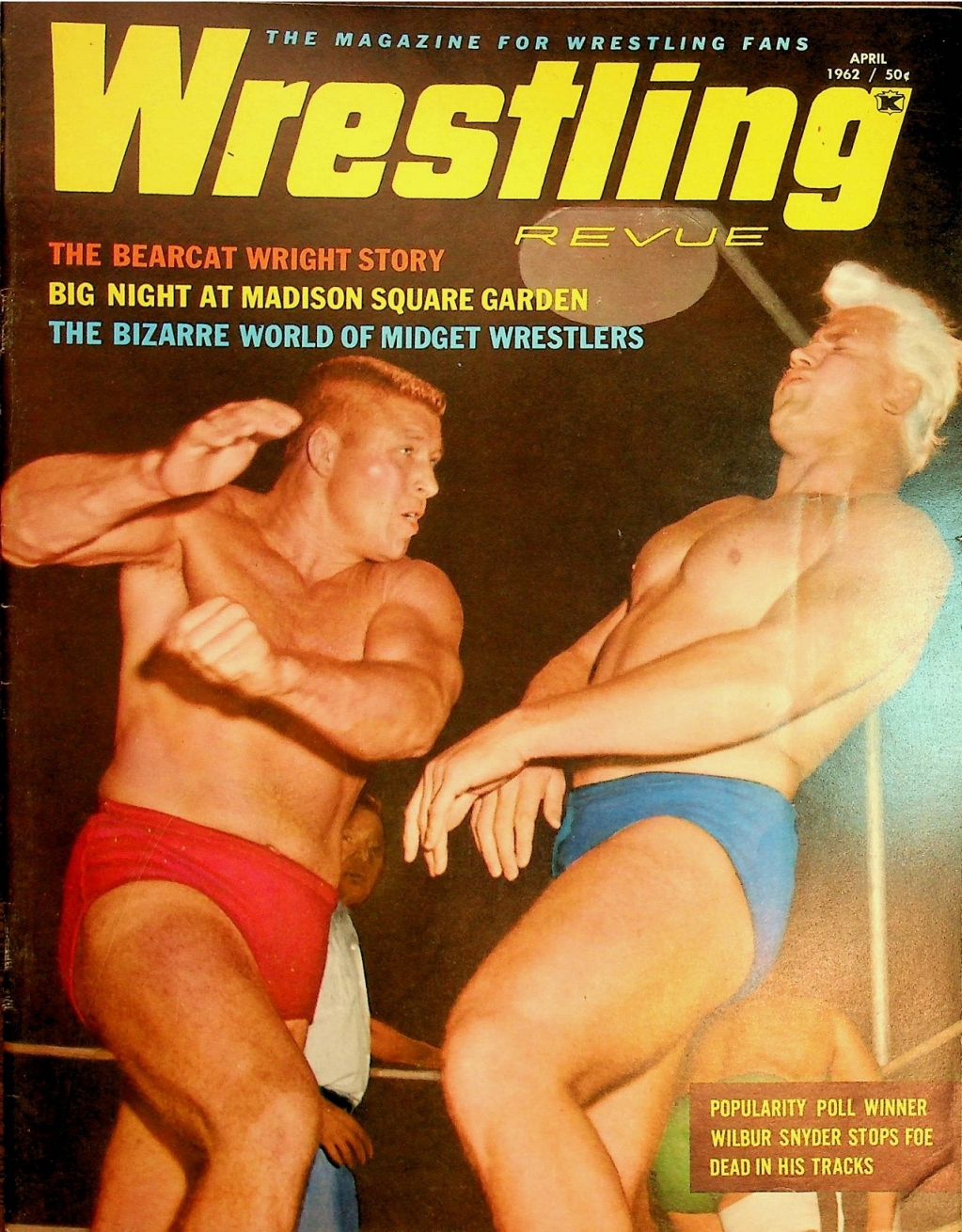
THE BIZARRE WORLD OF MIDGET WRESTLERS



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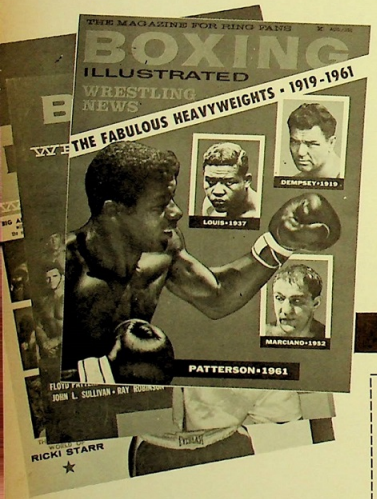

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Readers PROS AND CONS

EDDIE GRAHAM

STEINBORN AND GRAHAM

Sirs:

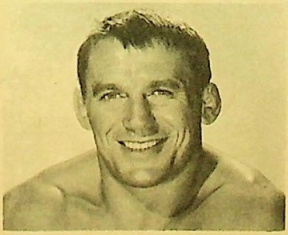
In my opinion the tag-team of Eddie Graham and Dickie Steinborn is the best in the world. Yet you rate them only ninth — below teams they could demolish without so much as batting an eyelash. I think WRESTLING REVUE should give them a higher rating. Something like first!

STEVE CUIVAR
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Sirs:

I would like to commend you for your fine magazine. I have a copy of every issue published. They keep getting better and better. But I do have one beef. You lead your readers to believe that Eddie Graham is nothing but a dirty villain. Down here in Miami, Eddie, together with partner Dickie Steinborn, recently won the U.S. Tag Team Title from the Fabulous Kangaroos. And they did it fairly and squarely! Eddie and Dick are fine tributes to wrestling and I think you should so inform your vast army of readers.

CRAIG A. HELLER
North Miami, Fla.



CARPENTIER

CARPENTIER IS MISSING

Sirs:

Your Wrestling Popularity Poll (Feb./62) was great except for one thing: You forgot to include the great Eduoard Carpentier in your Top Ten Ballot Box. My reasons are simple: First, the crowds love Carpentier. As a matter of fact, Ed is far and away my favorite wrestler. A striking example of the Frenchman's popularity occurred in a Fall, 1961 bout at Los Angeles' Olympic Auditorium. Eduoard was teamed with Ricki Starr against Art Mahalick and Clyde Steeves. As soon as Ed stepped out into the aisle leading to the ring the crowd cheered him wildly. Then, after he won the first fall, Carpentier was given a seven-minute standing ovation! Secondly, Eduoard's amazing popularity isn't limited to California. He is loved all over the U.S. and Canada.

JOHN LOVECCHIO
Burbank, Calif.

● Since space was limited. We could list only ten names in our Ballot Box. Carpentier was omitted, as were many other top wrestlers. But we allowed write-in choices. — ED.

LISOWSKI

RATE HIM!

Sirs:

Crusher Lisowski has defeated everyone worth defeating here in Pittsburgh, including the supposedly-great Johnny Valentine — twice. However Crusher is not even rated in your Top Ten.

RICHARD VATZ
Pittsburgh, Pa.

BRUISER

DON'T BAN BRUISER

Sirs:

Why all the fuss about banning Dick the Bruiser because he's too rough? Sure he's rough, but nobody will ever ban him. As Dick himself said, "Do you think a Commission will outlaw me and watch all that tax money slip through their fingers? Damn right they won't!" So let's have no more of that absurd "Ban the Bruiser" talk.

JUDY CAPPS
Kansas City, Kansas

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Wrestling REVUE

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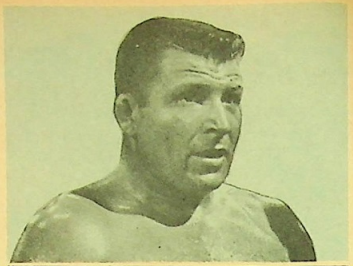

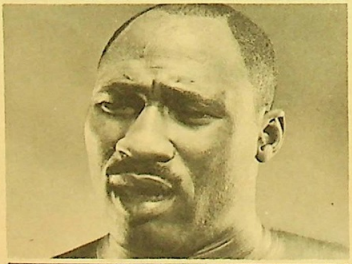

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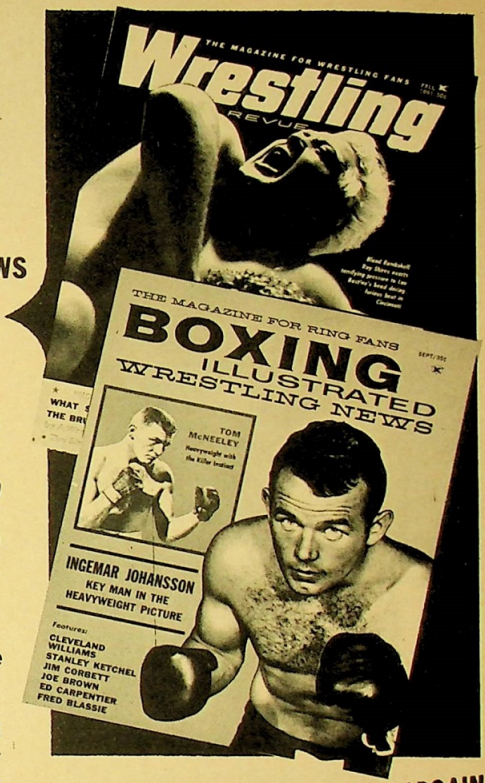

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READERS

(continued from page 3)

ROGERS

GO WEST, BUDDY

Sirs:

Buddy Rogers is the Champion of the World, but he's not accepted here in California. In Readers Corner (Feb./62) an English fan wrote: "If Mr. Rogers wants to make his a **real** world title he should try defending it here in England." Well, I'm saying the same thing, but with one big difference – let "The Champ" come to California. Here we recognize Fred Blassie as world's champ, since Fred beat Eduoard Carpentier. In his last start, Blassie successfully defended his title by pinning tough Enrique Torres. I believe Fred would do the same to Rogers, as would several others now campaigning in California – like Lou Thesz, Ray Stevens, Bob Ellis, Pepper Gomez, and Dick Hutton. In short, until Rogers comes West he'll be the most UN-World world champion of all time.

RONALD MARTINEZ
San Francisco, Calif.

KILLER WOULD EAT HIM UP

Sirs:

For six years I've been attending wrestling matches in Boston where I've seen Killer Kowalski take on almost every important wrestler in the business – and win. Which makes me feel that World Champion Buddy Rogers – no matter how great Buddy thinks he is – will not really be champ unless he beats Kowalski. And he can't.

BURT ROSENSTEIN
Dorchester, Mass.

HAIL THE COWBOY

Sirs:

Hail the Cowboy! On November 11, 1961, Cowboy Bob Ellis whipped Ray Stevens in San Francisco to win the U.S. Championship Belt. He won the sizzling match easily, and looked every bit a Champion in doing it. Now how about a story on the great Cowboy Bob Ellis?

LUIS CREIGHTON
San Francisco, Calif.

● Several stories on Ellis have appeared in previous issues of WRESTLING REVUE and, no doubt, more will be forthcoming. – ED.

THESE ARE DAINTIES?

Sirs:

Let's have a big article on wrestling's really big men – Haystacks Calhoun, Moose Cholak and Happy Humphrey. I enjoy watching these king-sized dainties and would like to know more about them.

TOM SCHULTZ
Menasha, Wisc.

LARRY CHENE

Sirs:

Detroit wrestling is the most exciting in the world because of Larry Chene. Not only is Larry a great wrestler, but he's also the nicest guy I've ever met. He goes out of his way to sign autographs and to oblige. One night, after a match in the Motor City, Chene stood outside the Auditorium for twenty minutes – in the rain – while he answered questions for we fans. We love him.

CLAIRE LONG AND LINDA LAKE
Tawas City, Mich.

ZBYSKO'S HITCHED

Sirs:

In the Feb./62 issue of WRESTLING REVUE there is a wonderful story about a wonderful young wrestler, Billy Zbysko, better known in the South as Bill Dromo. The story stated that Billy someday plans to get married. Well he already is. Last June, he got himself hitched to Karen Agnes Verbolt.

MANNIE WHITE
Vaucluse, S. C.

CHANGE THE RULE

Sirs:

I enjoyed the Feb./62 issue of WRESTLING REVUE very much, especially the story, "Wrestling Must Have a Universal Set of Rules." I agree wholeheartedly. But one rule in particular deserves wrestling's fullest attention. That is the disqualification rule, which decrees that a champion keeps his crown if he loses by disqualification. This gives champions an easy way out. A solution? Change the rule.

J. M. SEITZ
Beaumont, Tex.

ARAKAWA

MITSU ARAKAWA

Sirs:

Your story about Mits Arakawa (Feb./62) set me straight about a wrestler I had previously despised. I had no idea Mitsu was present at the bombing of Hiroshima, and that it was that tragedy which caused him to be a villain. It was the most intriguing story I have ever read about any wrestler.

DUKE IRROY
Bogolusa, La.

BIG DISPUTE ABOUT BIG BILL

Sirs:

Your story on Big Bill Miller (Feb./62) was revolting. I've seen this bully-wrestler many times and he's the meanest, cruelest, foulest man ever to step into a ring. WR would have been more intelligent to have simply ignored him.

JACKIE KROLL
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Sirs:

Big Bill Miller is a tough man in the ring. But in my book he's tops. It's about time WR gave long-overdue credit to this great performer.

KEN CHASSER
Kennet Square, Pa.

SUDDENLY WE'RE CULPRITS

Sirs:

For many months Dick Beyer has been the most popular wrestler in the Syracuse area. Now, following your brilliant story about him (Feb./62), Dick is certainly headed for national stardom. Because of this new fame, we fans in Northern New York State will probably lose him to the world. In other words, WRESTLING REVUE is a culprit!

HELEN SAMUELS
Syracuse, N. Y.

RAY STEVENS

WE HAVE OUR NERVE

Sirs:

I saw Ray Stevens defeat the following men: Bob Ellis (three times), Bill Melby, Bobo Brazil, Red Bastien, Mitsu Arakawa, and many, many other top stars. Yet you don't even include him in your Top Ten. Boy, you have your nerve!

WILLIAM BLAKEY
San Francisco, Calif.

Sirs:

I've stood by long enough watching you slight California wrestling, the best in the world. For instance, take the case of Ray Stevens: in San Francisco, Stevens defeated Cowboy Bob Ellis on three different occasions. You rate Ellis eighth, yet you don't even mention Stevens. That is an injustice to a great wrestler.

San Francisco, Calif.
JERRY GROSS

● See this month's ratings. — ED.

FIVE WORDS

Sirs:

As a wrestling fan, I can think of only five words that can accurately describe your great magazine — "Too Good to be True."

ROGER WATSON
Baker, Louisiana

BIG JIM ARMSTRONG

Sirs:

Australians are a straightforward people who say what is on their minds without stalling, and we admire anybody who does the same. Thus, when we decided to send this challenge to a national magazine, it was WRESTLING REVUE we chose, because you have a reputation for fairness no matter what vested interests you might offend by so doing. We make the following challenge openly, and with no vestige of false modesty, and we believe it will cause quite a furore in the entire wrestling world.

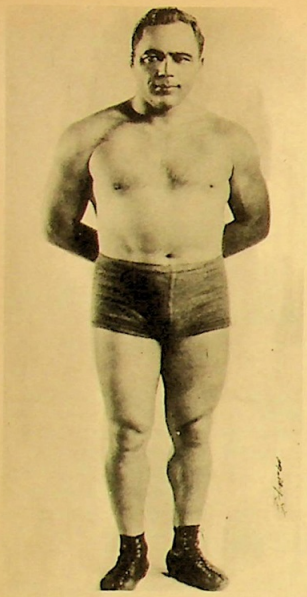
Did you know that here in Australia we have a man who is a legend to we sport loving Aussies. He has beaten two of the best wrestlers in the world and he states bluntly that he can do it again — any day of the week. His name? Big Jim Armstrong. The men he has defeated are former champions Dick Hutton and Pat O'Connor.

Boxing Illustrated magazine mentioned Jim indirectly in the February 1961 issue which featured a story on Dick Hutton. This appeared in that story; "Hutton was good enough to get a berth on the 1948 Olympic team, but then he busted a blood vessel and had to concede."

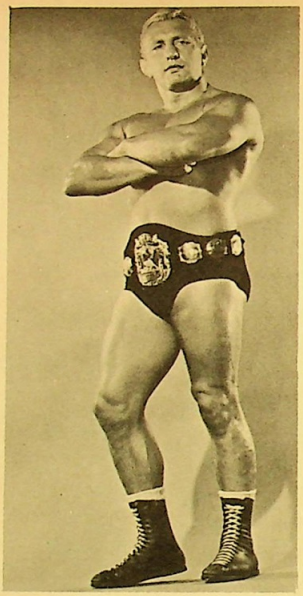
Guess who it was who busted Hutton's blood vessel? Big Jim Armstrong, of course. And it was Jim who went on to win the Olympic championship.

Armstrong stands six feet 2 and weighs 225 pounds. He openly challenges any man in the world to a finish match — winner take all. We in Australia say Jim is the best wrestler around today. If you in America disagree, we have Armstrong ready — and anxious — to prove you wrong, anywhere, any time. Any takers?

PAUL SAVELIEFF
Sydney, Australia



Gus Sonnenberg, the All-American football star from Dartmouth who revolutionized professional wrestling in the 1930's.



Current world champion Buddy Rogers. With his modern razzle-dazzle style, how would he have done against the old time champs?

PERFECTION! Wrestling

Some will argue that hold a candle to the old- But after a long and of Wrestling Revue came surprising conclusions

WRESTLING HAS COME OF AGE!

It has taken a long time, but wrestling can now look at its critics and laugh out loud, for it has reached a stage of perfection – in both execution and public acclaim – that guarantees a long and happy future for the King of Sports.

We are not talking about the rules that govern wrestling, or its promotion or its officials. We are discussing what goes on in the ring during a typical match involving a pair of leading mat stars. It cannot be improved upon.

Our authority for this statement is wrestling itself – the wrestlers, the promotors, the referees and the knowledgable fans. And history. This article is the result of a six-month survey by the editors of WRESTLING REVUE. We spoke to hundreds of experts, we pored over countless books, statistics, films and private letters. We interviewed old champions and young ones. Some of our contacts had witnessed bouts involving the great Frank Gotch and Hackenschmidt. Harry Jenner, aged 78, had seen the great Farmer Burns wrestle at the turn of the century. And from this wealth of fact, figures and nostalgia we drew our final conclusions.

They are outrageous conclusions, so far as modern wrestling's critics are concerned. Few sports editors will agree with them, and many old time fans will snort indignantly. The A.A.U. officials will have a fit, and so will some of the greybeards among the wrestlers themselves. But they can't change the hard facts of life. Or wrestling.

Chief spokesman for the "new" school of thought is seventy year old Toots Mondt, one of the country's leading promotors and one of the truly great wrestlers of all time. This rumbling bear of a man, who pulls the strings of his muscular empire from his Pittsburgh headquarters, is possibly the world's leading authority on wrestling. He is Webster's Dictionary, Roget's Thesaurus, Hoyles and the Bible. When he speaks, people listen.

Listen:

"I've lived through wrestling's growing pains," said Toots from the comfort of a big chair in his office. The 1920's were the end of the Golden Age of Wrestling – **old time** wrestling–and the 1930's were the transitional period when wrestling made the big change from the grunt and groan era to the modern slam-bang era of speed, spirit and sputnik."

When, he was asked, did modern wrestling really start – what was the actual turning point? Was it thirteen years ago, when wrestling first appeared on national TV?

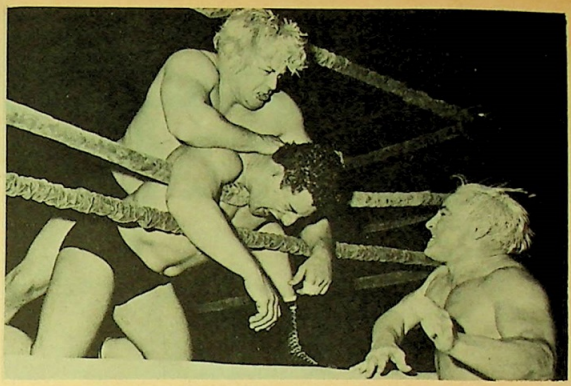
Mondt smiled and shook his grizzled head. "No – and that's a big fallacy that most people believe. They think that wrestling was different, somehow, before they first saw it on their television screens. Actually, we've been wrestling exactly as we do now for the last thirty years. There have been refinements, sure, and newer, fresher gimmicks. But what you see on TV today is what they saw at the Garden and in other arenas throughout the country since the early thirties!"

Then what was the thing that changed it all? we asked.

"One day around the beginning of the Great Depression a young athlete from Dartmouth Univer-

Today's wrestlers couldn't imers. Maybe not. arduous study, The Editors up with some

BY HAL HENNESEY



Ray Stevens, who is recognized in California as the U.S. Champion, goes to work on Jim Hady. Tactics like this are supposedly what gave the sport an entire new look. But old timers will continue to argue that this is what ruined wrestling.

sity decided to become a professional wrestler. He came down out of New England and startled the wits out of the wrestling world with his spectacular method. A football star, he brought the gridiron to the wrestling mat. His favorite device being the flying tackle, and when he used it on an opponent, the opponent usually lost the match and the fans lost their heads. Nothing like it had ever been seen before – and wrestling was never the same again. It had entered its final phase as a sport. The greatest phase.

"The young wrestler was Gus Sonnenberg, of course, and he tackled his way into history. Every one of today's wrestlers, before a match, should bow his head for ten seconds in memory of Sonnenberg – because he wouldn't be making the dough he is if it weren't for Gus."

As is now known, television didn't introduce a new style of wrestling to the American public – it merely introduced the American public to wrestling as it had been for the last twenty years.

Lou Thesz, who has been a champion or contender since the late 1930's is another who can speak with authority. "I don't wrestle any differently than I did 25 years ago," he says. "The only difference is that now, more people see me."

We asked many of our interviewees a question that has been raging for years. Which were superior – today's rough-and-ready wrestlers, or the old time mastadons of the Hackenschmidt-Gotch type?

The consensus of opinion is that today's stars would have shocked, stunned and dynamited the old timers into early submission. One of the men who wrestled both types a generation ago speaks out: fellows back B.S. – before Sonnenberg – and I wrestled the newer

"I wrestled some of those old crop which came later. Believe me, I had to make the switch real fast! The new generation was faster, more explosive, more punishing. Let me put it this way: Take the top six wrestlers performing on any program at Madison Square Garden and match them with any of the leading champions of forty years ago – assuming the impossible, naturally, that all would be in their prime. I guarantee that six out of seven matches would be won by guys like Killer Kowalski, Pat O'Connor, Lou Thesz, The Bruiser, Hans Schmidt and Fred Atkins. While the old timer was prancing around flat-footed, trying to get behind his man so he could clamp a toehold or full nelson on him, he'd suddenly find himself knocked flat by a drop kick; before he could get up he'd be knee-dropped, tomahawked, judo-chopped or elbow-smashed – and while he was still wondering how those six other guys had jumped him, he'd be pinned!"

But all this doesn't settle the biggest question of all – a question that will never be settled: **Who were the superior wrestlers?** Maybe the old boys were better – **by their own standards!** Toots Mondt thinks they were. But that's like trying to decide which is the better car, a Corvette or a Chrysler. You just can't compare them. **Both** are better for the purpose they were designed for.

Todays' wrestlers are designed for todays' atomic-age wrestling, with their combination of slick wrestling and eye-catching showmanship. They are what the fans want to see. They came about through a process of evolution – of progress. And they can't be improved upon.

So let's not have any more silly arguments about it! Let's forget whether or not Frank Gotch could have licked Buddy Rogers; let's stop wishing we could bring back the old days; let's not take any backward steps. Instead, let's agree that wrestling has reached its peak as a spectator sport.

And let's all enjoy it! ●

Has Reached It's Final Plateau

WILBUR SNYDER WINS

More than 27,000 votes were cast by WR readers in wrestling's first nation-wide popularity poll —with some surprising results

AS ALL but brand new WRESTLING REVUE readers are aware, in last month's issue we ran a popularity poll to discover America's Most Popular Wrestler. Ten "candidates" were on the ticket, prejudged to be North America's ten top regional favorites. We published a ballot which allowed you, the voters, to pick **your** favorite wrestlers in order of choice.

THE BALLOTS ARE ALL IN — THE VOTES HAVE BEEN COUNTED!

HERE ARE THE RESULTS.

Place	Wrestler	% of Total Votes
1	WILBUR SNYDER	.121
2	JOHNNY VALENTINE	.120
3	VERNE GAGNE	.119
4	ANTONINO ROCCA	.113
5	PEPPER GOMEZ	.102
6	YUKON ERIC	.092
7	WHIPPER WATSON	.091
8	PAT O'CONNOR	.085
9	LARRY CHENE	.079
10	BOBO BRAZIL	.078

POPULARITY POLL

WE ALSO asked you to write the reason — in 25 words or less — for your Number One choice. A few dozen voters failed to give their reason, so their ballots had to be discounted. The others, though, gave thousands of excellent reasons for voting as they did.

THE RESULTS of the election were, as we anticipated, very close. The winner nosed out the runner-up by less than 30 ballots — and only 500 votes separated the first five places. This is dramatic testimony to the fact that competition among America's top wrestlers is frantic — and healthy.

A WHOPPING 27,594 ballots were cast in all. This is a far greater representative cross-section of the American public than is used by big rating services in determining public opinion on national issues.

THERE WERE a few surprises. We at WRESTLING REVUE wrote in our own ballots, strictly for the sake of comparison — and curiosity; these were not included in the actual vote count. It is you, the wrestling fan, who should decide your favorite stars — and this you did.

HERE'S HOW YOU DID IT.

THE RESULTS are worthy of a few comments. The big surprise was Pat O'Connor's lowly eighth place showing, which proves that nothing is as "ex" as an ex-champion. On the other hand, Pat is still among the first ten and only about 1,000 votes separated him from first place. So you can't really say that O'Connor is on the road back — he never really left!

IT WAS pleasant to see the great Verne Gagne still on top. Just 60 votes more would have clinched first place for him.

ALTHOUGH Antonino Rocca has never been champion, he has been called the "Uncrowned King" for many years. His popularity has never flagged — as our poll clearly shows. There is little doubt but that many fans voted for Rocca even though they had never seen him in action — thanks to the fact that he is the most publicized wrestler in the world. For this reason, we must repeat that WRESTLING REVUE'S poll was intended **not** to determine the best wrestler, but the most popular. As you see, current champion Buddy Rogers and top contender Fred Blassie did not make the top ten, yet they are certainly among the world's most skillful wrestlers.

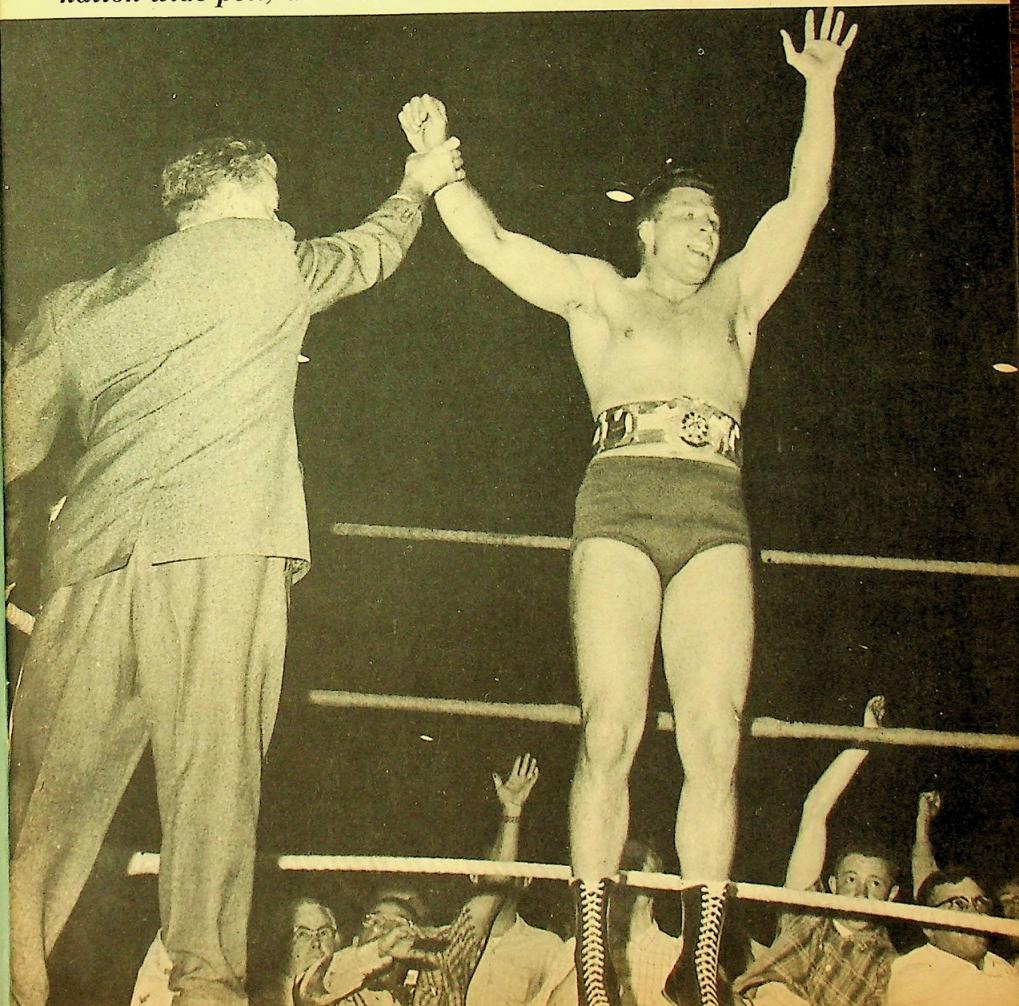
OF COURSE, the big headlines concern winner Wilbur Snyder. America has named the young Californian its Most Popular Wrestler. There is no doubt about it — its official. Since Wilbur is a modest man, we suspect the news will be a complete surprise to him. He will be presented with the WRESTLING REVUE Plaque in token of his exalted position and stunning victory.

THE WRESTLING REVUE POPULARITY POLL was an exciting and memorable experience for those of us who took part in it. We hope you enjoyed participating; most of all, we trust you were satisfied with the results. If not — well, keep on supporting the wrestlers of your choice and root even harder for your personal favorite: It may help him win next time!

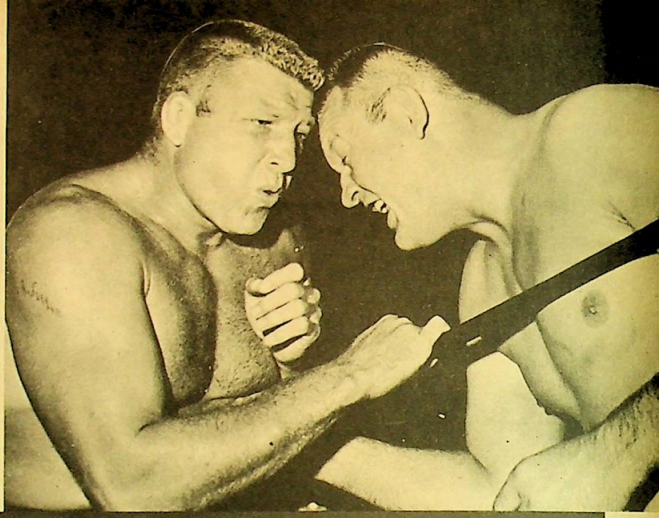
AND NOW — sit back and read the full-length feature story on the life of America's Most Popular Wrestler — WILBUR SNYDER.

THE WILBUR SNYDER STORY

Soon after Snyder was named America's Most Popular Wrestler in WR's nation-wide poll, an exclusive interview was arranged with the winner.

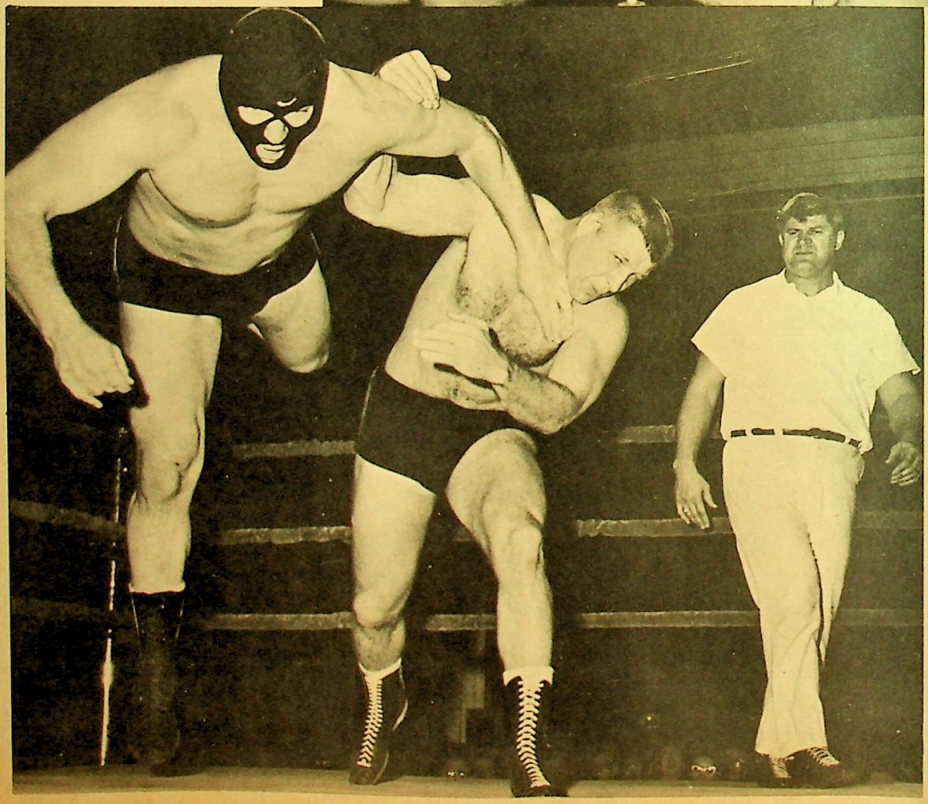


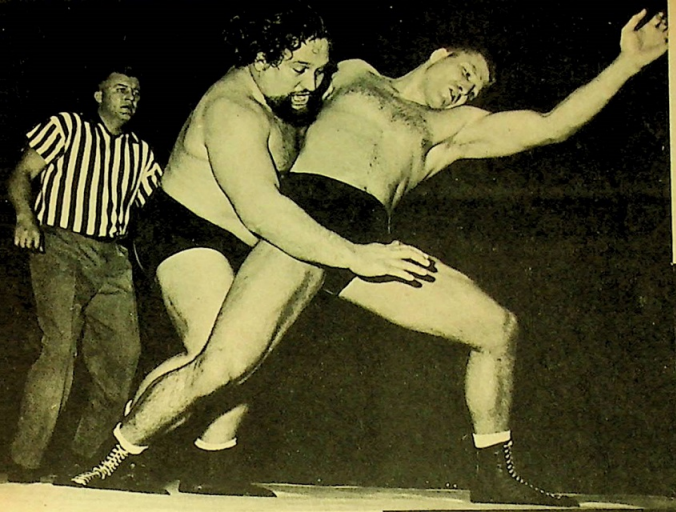
Snyder, left, is at his best when wrestling against tough powerhouses like famed Canadian Gene Kiniski, shown here during furious exchange in St. Louis match.



SOMETIMES IT'S EASY to write about a wrestler. They are generally colorful characters both in and out of the ring, and their lives are, for sports writers, "hot copy". They make news. Often the newer stars, even those with little wrestling experience, virtually write their own stories because of the romantic or adventurous lives they have led.

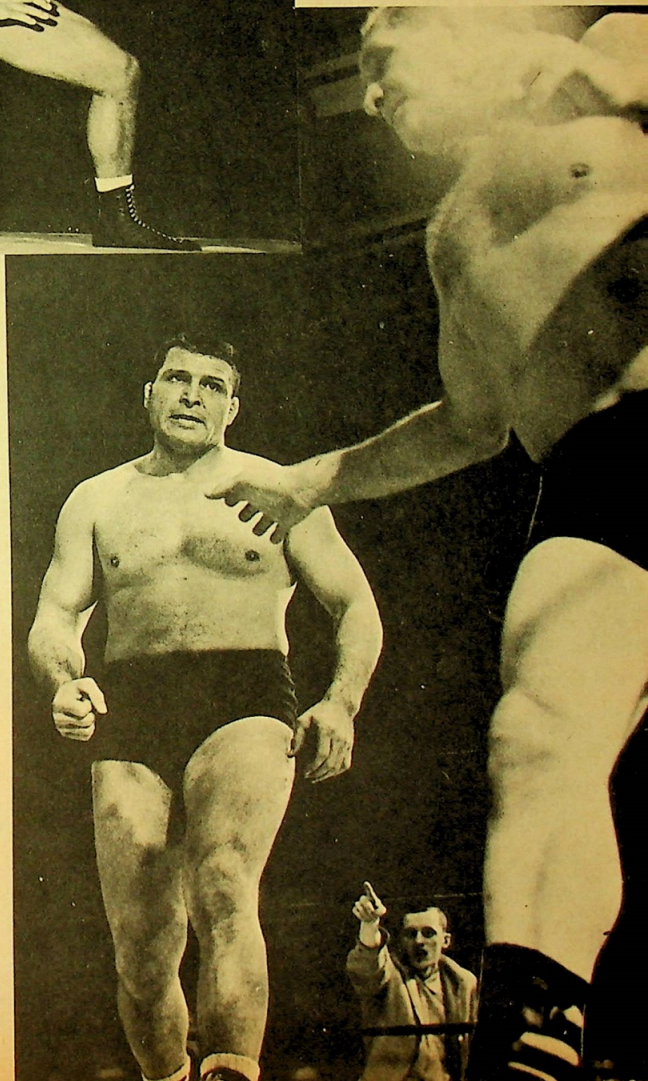
Snyder flips black-masked foe across the ring in bout at Chicago. Wilbur is a very aggressive and skillful wrestler.





Snyder's lean, graceful body strains as he is about to upset 305-pound Italian strongman Baron Gattoni.

Wilbur eyes old pro Bobby Bruns as the latter quickly gets out of range after giving Snyder the knee.



It was easy, for example, to write a story about that rocketing new personality, Sweet Daddy Siki, because of his rich heritage and the fact that he once wrestled crocodiles for a living. Big Don Leo Jonathan hunted big game and once got himself shot when working as a deputy sheriff — that's good stuff to write about. And old timers like Gorgeous George and Antonino Rocca—well, just think about them for a minute and a hundred good stories come to mind.

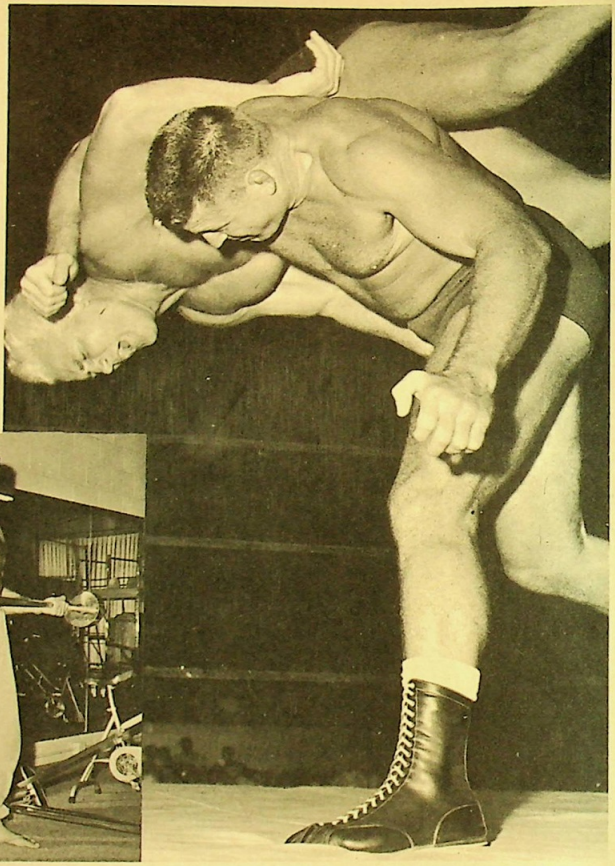
But sometimes a wrestler comes along who never shot a lion, never wrestled a crocodile, never got shot — never did anything out of the ordinary, in fact—except work his way to the top of the mat world.

Such a man is Wilbur Snyder. His latest accomplishment is to be named America's Most Popular Wrestler. Because of this, WRESTLING REVUE decided to write the Wilbur Snyder Story. We dug into our files, pored over old clippings and records; then we interviewed Wilbur in St. Louis, hub of his current work area.

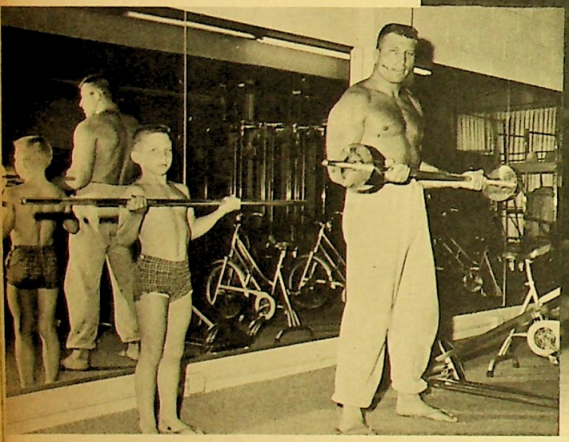
"What we need to start this story, Wilbur," we said, as Snyder got his breath back after winning his 2000th match, give or take a few hundred, "— is an anecdote, a

significant incident in your childhood or from your early career that will serve to introduce you to the public – you know, something that will reveal your character and lead into the full story of your life."

Wilbur thought awhile, his handsome, crewcut head bowed as he chewed on his lips. "Does it have to be exciting?" he asked.



Big Stan Lisowski is handled like a child by Snyder as he hurls Stan over his back and down to the canvas. A maneuver like this requires enormous strength.



Physical fitness fanatic Snyder works out in Kansas City gymnasium with his young son. Says Wilbur: "In my opinion, condition is the most important factor in the success of any professional wrestler."

"Nothing exciting ever happened to me that I can remember. Unless –" and his expressive face brightened, "– unless it was the time I got out of high school."

Writers have to get used to things like this. We have to learn to hide our feelings. "Okay, Wilbur," we said, "tell us about your graduation."

"Not the graduation," protested the 240-pound behemoth who stands six feet four, "– the **wedding**! As soon as I got out of school I married my childhood sweetheart. The reason I made sure of her so early was that Bob Waterfield was sweet on her too and I didn't want him to take her away from me."

"Bob Waterfield, the great Los Angeles Rams quarterback?"

"Yes, we went to school together, the three of us. It doesn't look right for high school kids to be married, so I waited until we graduated. I was eighteen when Shirley said yes."

"– And Waterfield –?"

"Went on to marry Jane Russell and make football history."

We admitted that that wasn't much of an anecdote. We'd have to start the story some other way; like the shock treatment, when you quote a top wrestler like Carpentier saying "I can lick Floyd Patterson!" Something like that. We asked Snyder to make a startling statement.

He laughed out loud. "Gosh, I can't think of anything like that. Anyway, what's so startling about what Carpentier said. I could lick Floyd Patterson. Not only that, **any** good wrestler can do it. They'd advance to within punching distance of him, and when he leaped in with his kangaroo punch, or whatever they call it, the wres-

(*continued on page* 66)

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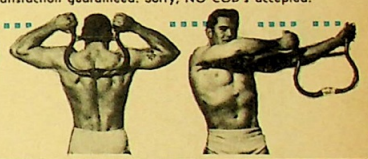

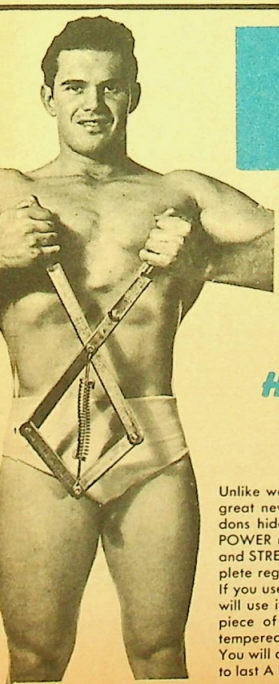

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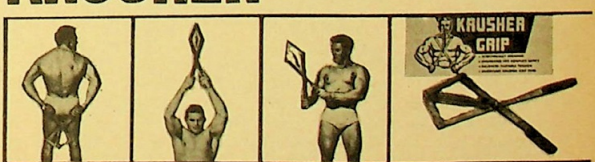

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Jonathan, when the going got too hot, leans over ring apron to ring the bell.

BOUTS WE CAN'T FORGET

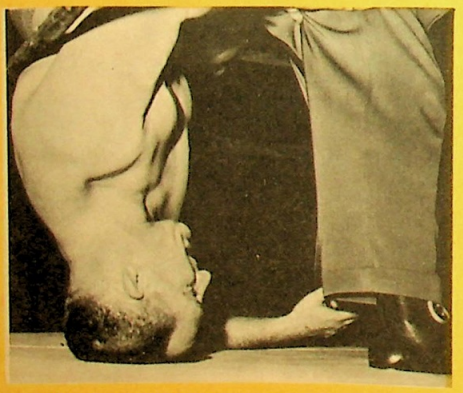
DON LEO JONATHAN VS. PAT O'CONNOR

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN OCTOBER 8, 1958

DICK HUTTON was champion of the world. Competition among the top challengers was frantic and exciting. When, in October, 1958, it was announced that two of the leading contenders would meet at Milwaukee Arena, the wrestling world buzzed like a party line throughout the Mid-west. There could be no doubt about it – when gigantic Don Leo Jonathan and Pat O'Connor got together in the same ring, anything could happen!

Everything did. On the basis of their records, O'Connor was a slight favorite. Although much lighter – by fifty pounds – than the 280-pound Jonathan, Pat was, and still is, one of the most scientific wrestlers in the business. Only luck would enable big Don to win. Or so the smart money thought.

Big Don Leo tortures O'Connor with hammerlock as the bout reaches ten minute mark. This hold is Don's pet weapon.



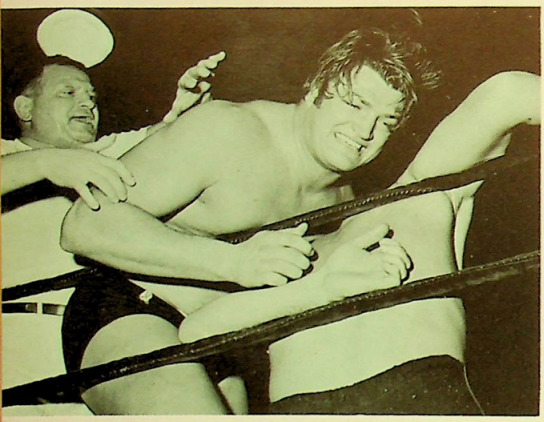
O'Connor is entangled in ropes and suspended head down as Jonathan, not shown, is about to attach him.

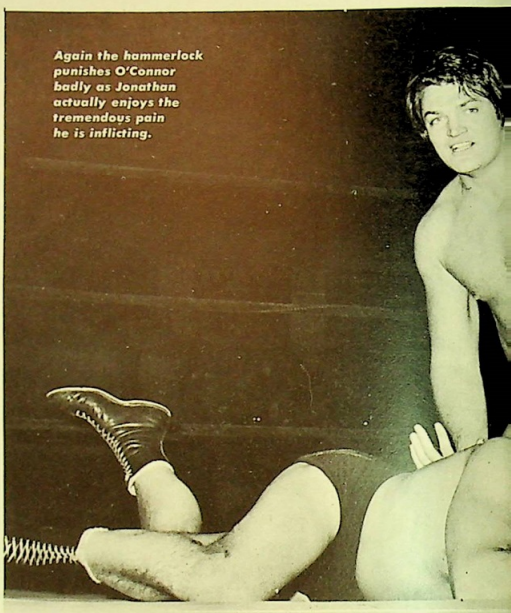
They were wrong. After each had taken a fall, Jonathan went all out to prove that he had more than brute strength in his arsenal. He also knew how to wrestle. Jonathan had already proved this in other parts of the country. He had been wildly successful in Texas – billed as "champion" of the state – and now, in the Chicago area, he was doing very well. But he was still primarily a tough guy in the minds of his new friends – and enemies. So he determined to win this all-important match with sheer science.

He didn't quite do it. Not with science. He won the third and decisive fall – or, at least, set it up – with a vicious elbow smash that buckled O'Connor's legs and sent him slumping to the canvas. At once, the speedy Jonathan leaped in for the kill. He hurled his great weight atop his victim and locked him in his patented Mormon Sickle hold. This came after an evening in which Don kept up the tension by striving for his favored hammerlock. His change of tactics was a complete surprise to O'Connor, which probably had a lot to do with Pat's defeat.

(*continued on page* 20)

The two pictures below illustrate Jonathan's great size and overpowering methods as he melts down his foe.





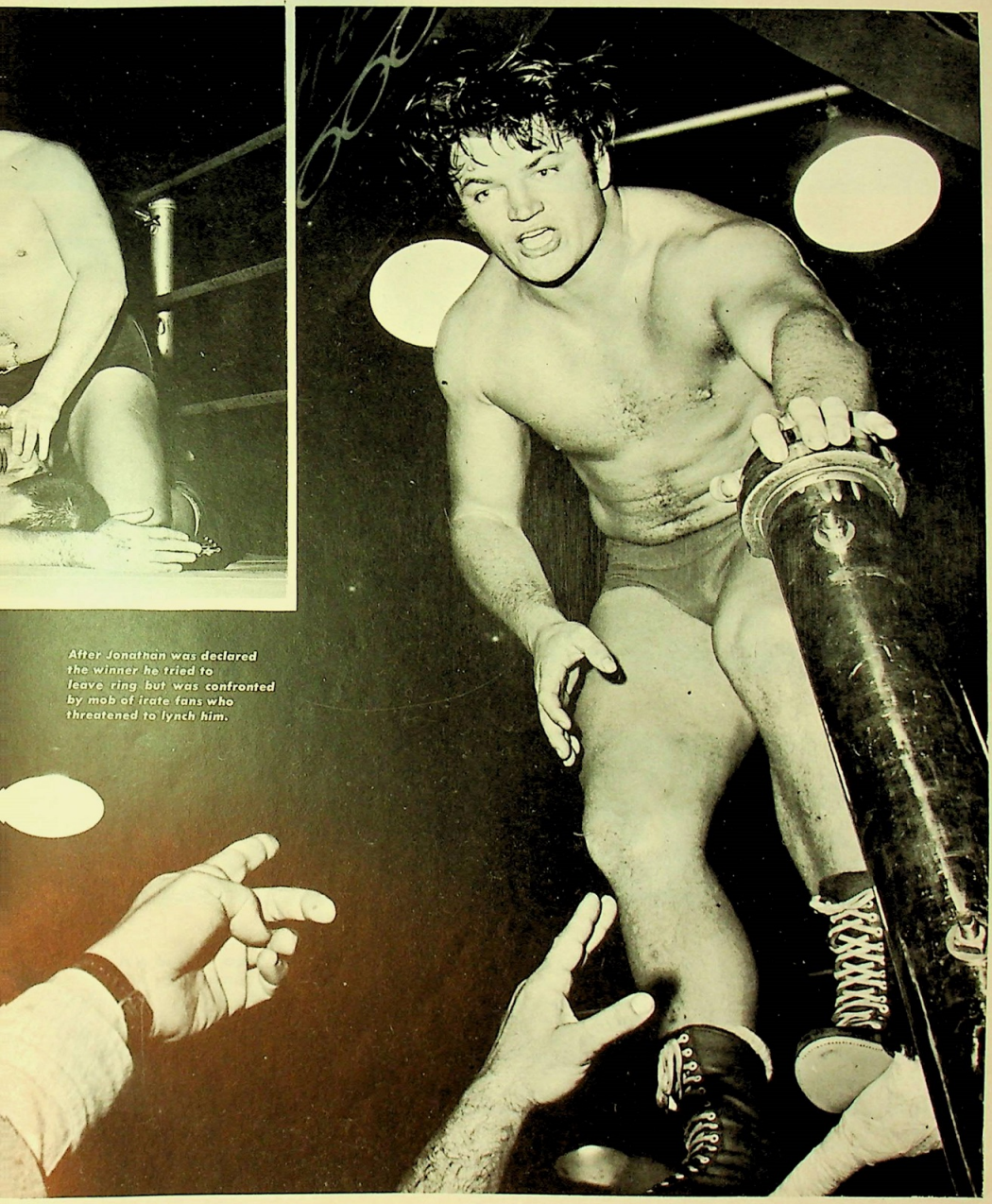
Again the hammerlock punishes O'Connor badly as Jonathan actually enjoys the tremendous pain he is inflicting.

(*continued from page* 18)

That, it must be admitted, is science.

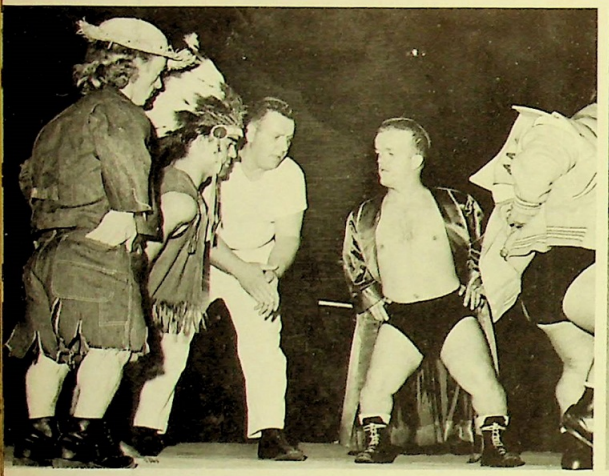
After the match, both O'Connor and Don Leo got their whack at champion Dick Hutton. As history tells us, it was O'Connor who went on to defeat Hutton the following year to become one of the best-liked champions of all time. But, on that one October evening three years ago, it was Don Leo Jonathan who furnished the thrills and took the laurels. He deserves a lot of credit – because he's a lot of man. . . . ●

O'Connor tries to spin out of hammerlock. But Jonathan holds on successfully.



After Jonathan was declared the winner he tried to leave ring but was confronted by mob of irate fans who threatened to lynch him.

Fame, Fortune, Fu



Life among th

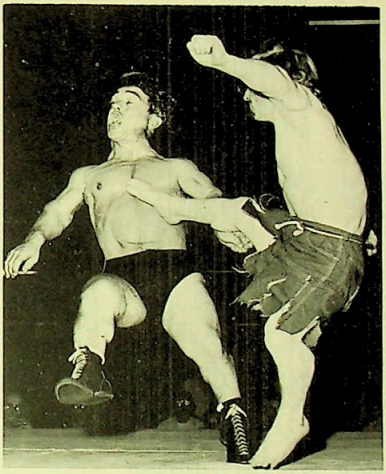
You cheer them, you laugh at them — and sometimes you jeer them. To you, the fans, they are a delightful novelty, well worth the price of admission. It is regrettable that you lose sight of the fact that they are also human beings.

BY STANLEY WESTON

"LOOK AT ME," screamed Fuzzy Cupid as he danced on the heaving chest of his beaten opponent. "I'm ten feet tall!" He kept jumping up and down on the helpless body of the vanquished wrestler until a husky policeman leaped through the ropes, tucked Cupid under one arm and bore him, struggling and still screaming, from the ring. "I'm ten feet tall," wailed the falsetto voice of the little man, "— **ten feet tall!**" The voice grew weaker and weaker until it was lost amid the strident thunder of the roaring crowd.

So spoke Fuzzy Cupid in the voice of midgets and dwarfs everywhere. **"I'm ten feet tall,"** they scream, whisper and sing, these tiny creatures born of tragedy, who are innocent of their affliction yet pay a fearful price for it. Their sole crime against humanity is the fact that they are

n and Furor:



Far left: Midgets keep crowds roaring with laughter even before bouts begin.

Girl midgets like Gypsy Rose, left, and Doll Paige are a comparatively new innovation to wrestling.

Midget star Cowboy Bradley was married in Amarillo, Texas ring just before main event of evening began.

Farmer McGregor, a compact little package of dynamite, kicks Tom Thumb to floor.

e Midget Wrestlers

two or three feet shorter than the rest of us.

As Tiny Roe, one of the more articulate midget wrestlers, once put it to an interviewer, "What's the longest foot in the world?" And when the five-foot-seven interviewer shook his head, Roe said, "The foot that separates the top of your head from mine." In those few words, Roe stated the case for the midgets. For those who can understand, those words are as revealing as an entire volume.

And that is all that midgets ask – understanding.

Unfortunately, there are too few normal-sized persons who understand them. That is the reason for this article; it is a plea to our readers for sympathy and compassion when they confront those fun-loving, happy-go-lucky, guileless and tragic little figures of the ring, the midgets.

First, a few important statistics. There are about 3,000 "Little People" in North America. They are divided into two distinctly different groups – midgets and dwarfs. Most people are by now aware of the difference: a midget is a perfectly proportioned human being but differing from the rest of us only in size; he is less than four feet eleven inches tall. The dwarfs are people with normal-

(continued on next page)

Tom Thumb, right, is the oldest active midget wrestler. He is 47, has been wrestling since 1947, earns an average of $20,000 per year.

Picture taken in 1954 in Columbus, Ohio, shows Fuzzy Cupid getting instructions from Lou Bastine. Lou, who was to become famous as part of the popular Bastine Brothers, spent three years supervising groups of touring midget wrestlers.

Right: The remarkably agile Sky Low Low takes off like a jet with Beau Brummell acting as launching pad.

sized heads and upper bodies; their limbs, however, are only about 2/3 as long as normal, giving them a grotesque appearance. Most of the "midget" wrestlers you see in the ring are dwarfs. About the only true wrestling midget we know of is former Canadian jockey Tiny Roe.

Averaging four feet in height, virtually all dwarfs and midgets belong to their "union", the Little People of America. One of the most exclusive groups comprise the midget wrestlers; they are also the highest paid. Possibly they are the happiest — or the least unhappy.

Midget wrestling has been with us for about 15 years. It was just after World War II that Jack Britton, a shrewd Detroit promoter conceived the whole idea. Before that, midgets had been used as comic relief on an occasional wrestling show, but it never caught on big. Britton, however, looking around for gimmicks to beef up the sick wrestling industry, hit upon the idea of supplying midget wrestlers on an organized basis. The big difference would be that the little fellows would really be able to wrestle. It would not be merely comic relief.

Among the pioneers still active are Fuzzy Cupid, Tiny Tim and Irish Jackie. Today, Britton and his partner Bert Ruby hold practically a monopoly on midget wrestling throughout the world. Their stable consists of about fifteen wrestlers — and that's about all there are, making it a pretty exclusive group.

Britton gives a capsule picture of midget wrestling as it is today. "The midgets are a miniature gold mine. They've become very popular in the last five years especially. But, since they're only good as a novelty, we can't keep them in any one territory more than two weeks. As a result they travel

more than other wrestlers, averaging from $15,000 to $20,000 apiece in yearly income. We put most of it in the bank for them or send it home to their parents. The reason for this is that these little fellows are completely irresponsible about money matters – and most other matters, as well. They toss money around like a farmer sowing grain. Although they're worth every penny they're paid, I have to admit they're a headache to manage. It takes a guy with iron nerves and the patience of Job to chauffeur them around."

One of the guys with iron nerves is Lou Bastine. Before he became famous as one-half the highly successful Bastine Brothers, Lou was the chauffeur, guardian, father-confessor, nurse-maid and whipping boy for a station-wagon full of midget wrestlers for several years, starting in 1952.

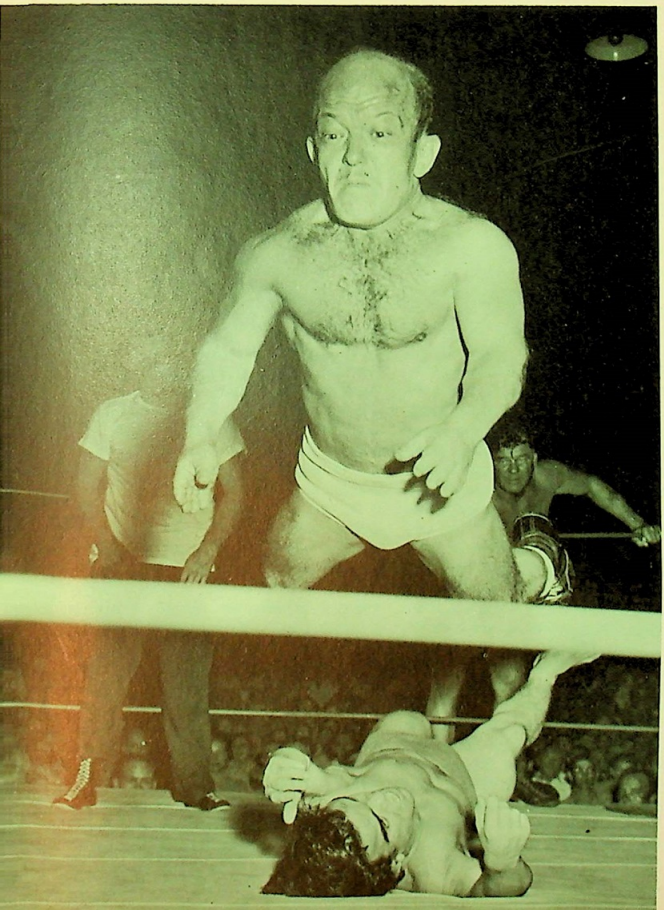
"I herded those little characters over a million miles, and what happened during those years would make a mighty interesting book," recalls Bastine with a mixture of fondness and relief – fondness for his tiny charges and relief that it's all over. "We drove all over the country, from one wrestling town to another, sleeping in motels, in the car, by the roadside – and not a day passed without something exciting, nerve-wracking and sometimes incredible happening.

"It's tough enough for normal people to drive for long periods – try taking your family across the country sometime – but when you've got a half dozen emotional, impatient, sex-starved midgets cooped up in a car for days at a time – man, that spells mishap with a capital mis!

"Sometimes we had to take along midgets who would be booked to wrestle against one another. Most big wrestlers can take this in their stride, even though they may not like it. But the midgets hate their opponents outside the ring as well as in. I'd be driving along smoothly at times, happy for a little peace and quiet, when all of a sudden a disturbance would break out in the rear of the car. It would sound like a pack of wildcats thrown into the same cage. I always had to stop the car to keep from wrecking it as a tiny body was apt to come flying over the front seat and right into my lap.

"Talk about temperament! No opera diva was ever as temperamental as those midgets! Sometimes it seemed they did things just to bug me. Once, on the way from Indianapolis to Chicago, one of them decided he had to go to the bathroom. Well, nothing wrong with that. I stopped at the next gas station and let him out. A couple miles farther another one made up his mind – he had to go to the bathroom. So I stopped at a road stand. Only he got out. 'Anybody else?' I asked. Nobody moved. Okay. Five minutes later a third one hollered out. I was getting tired of it by now. So when this one got back in I told them that nobody was leaving the car till we got to Chicago. And I didn't stop. Only thing wrong was, the other three really had to go. And they did, in the car! From then on I made regular rest stops, like buses, and we had no more trouble. Not that kind, anyway."

But there was plenty of other trouble and it makes for a rich, humorous stream of anecdotes as told by Lou Bastine. But through



all of his stories, however funny, is that ever-present note of tragedy that tinges the lives of the little people.

"They love gambling," says Bastine, "and their favorite game is poker. I've seen them sit around a table in a motel with a five thousand dollar kitty in front of them, and nonchalantly raising several hundred dollars at a time on just a pair! No sense of responsibility at all. And when they play with normal-sized strangers it's murder. I'd never let them do it when I could stop it. But every now and then they'd escape and bam! — first thing I'd know I'd have to go scouring the gambling halls after them. And when it wasn't gambling it was sex."

Probably the sex problems of midgets present their greatest individual sorrow. An interview with one of the most popular "villain" midgets, Fuzzy Cupid, brought out the following confession of pathos and human misery.

"I was in show business before I took up wrestling," said Fuzzy when collared in his dressing room after a bloody match with Bouncing Bernie Burke. It took place in Detroit, his home stand, where the midgets seem to be ever in demand despite continual exposure. "Show people, although they may have glamor for the audience who only sees them from in front of the footlights or on the screen, are cruel and heartless. They're always playing jokes on each other, especially on those who can't fight back. While with them, life was hell for me. And they hit me where it hurt most — in the heart." Cupid shook his head sadly.

"I was always sickly as a kid, and when I was seven I was taken down with polio. I was in the hospital for six years — 1939 to 1945. Because of this I only got as far as the sixth grade in school. When I got out of the hospital I had to earn my own living. The only place for most midgets is show business. So I joined a road company of "Snow White" and toured with them all over the country. I got fifty dollars a week playing one of the seven dwarfs. Somehow — maybe because I was more sensitive than the others, and a practical joker always picks on the sensitive ones to play his dirty jokes — the goons in the company picked on me most of all. And in the cruelest way.

"These so-called 'normal' people knew that midgets have a rough sex life," said Fuzzy. Very few large women will have anything to do with us, and girls our own size are very rare. We almost never see one. Sure, the big girls call us 'cute' and 'adorable' and they bounce us on their knees and tantalize us cruelly — but when it gets down to the wire they shudder and yelp and drop us like hot potatos. Instead of teasing us they should just let us alone, period.

"More than once some joker would come up to me in the dressing room and say something like, 'Fuzzy, there's a hot-blooded blonde down on the stage who wants to meet you. She looks willing and able and just your size. Better go out and take a look.' And, even though I'd been stung before, there was always the hope that this time it might be true. So I'd run down to the stage — only to find a white chow dog that belonged to a stage hand. As I stood there with the dog in the middle of the stage, so hurt and angry that tears came to my eyes. Then somebody would raise the curtain and there, out front, would be a bunch of the actors, laughing at me fit to kill. I was fit to kill too, only they didn't know it. Luckily I held my temper most of the time. Why look like more of a fool than I had to? I only hope that some of those creeps look back on those days and feel ashamed."

It was during the tour of this road company that Fuzzy Cupid's life changed abruptly. In Galveston, Texas, he went with a couple of other Snow White dwarfs to see the wrestling matches. On the card was one of the first midget matches. Fuzzy Cupid was so excited he could hardly sit still.

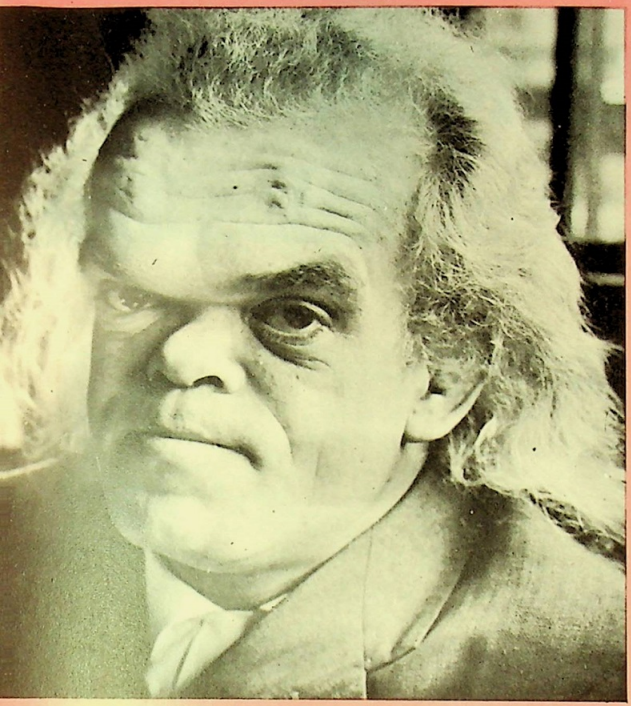
"I watched those midgets up there in the spot light, the eyes of the crowd on them. The people laughed and cheered them, and the midgets were obviously enjoying their work, rough as it was. After the show I went around to the promoter's office. He knew right away what I wanted, although I was so embarrassed and excited I could hardly talk. This man, Norman Brown, was the first normal-sized person to treat me like a human being. He told me to come around next day and to bring a few pictures of myself. I had got myself into good physical shape since my recovery from polio, and I had a good build. He was impressed enough to give me a chance. He sent the pictures up to Jack Britton in Detroit and a new life began for me just like that."

That same story, in one variation or another, is told by most midget wrestlers. There is the unhappy childhood, the inevitable breaking into show business, the cruelties and frustrations — and the once-in-a-lifetime chance to become a human being in the world of wrestling.

Wrestling, for midgets, is as tough a profession as it is for normal people. The standards are high and only the most rugged survive. They must be fine athletes, versatile acrobats, and they must know how to wrestle. Their training is overseered by Jack Britton and Bert Rubi, ex-wrestlers themselves, with the help of other wrestlers. The little fellows go through a training regimen that is about the same as that accorded their bigger counterparts. Some of them take to it quickly; these become the top stars. Some are intelligent enough to devise gimmicks and use them to best advantage. And a few achieve real status in the wrestling world.

Wrestling fans have their favorites, of course. Among the most popular is Little Beaver, son of a Canadian Indian chief of normal size. He went to the Hudson Bay School in northern Quebec before journeying to Montreal to try his hand at wrestling. An excellent shot with the bow and arrow, Beaver has invented a blow he calls "The Tomohawk."

Another star, and a veteran of the pioneer days, is Major Tom Thumb. Born in England 34 years ago, Tom came to America to be a truck driver! With extensions on the controls, he succeeded at what might seem an impossible



Probably the most well known of all the midget wrestlers is Fuzzy Cupid. A sad man who spent most of his youth in hospitals, the lines of suffering are etched deep into his face.

job. It gave an indication of his determination to take his place among normal people. Then he joined a carnival and became a champion weight lifter. His record of 155 pounds is considered a phenomenal lift for one so small. Like most of his fellow midgets, Tom is about four feet tall and weighs about 90 pounds.

Other well-known midget wrestlers are Pee Wee James, who came off a New England farm after one of the less unhappy childhoods; Irish Jackie, of Ireland and Flint, Michigan, who has starred in Hollywood and is a top money maker among the little folk; Cowboy Bradley, who wears ten gallon hats and fifty dollar boots; and Ivan the Terrible, who came from the Ukraine, looks like a pocket-sized cossack and acts like one in the ring.

And, of course, there are the girls. Two of them. In all the land, there are only two girl midget wrestlers working full time. They are Baby Cheryl, the tiny brunette bad gal, and Little Darling Dagmar, the Marilyn Monroe of the midgets. These 80-pound dolls go around the country wrestling one another and teaming up with big girls to form novelty matches that generally pack the house.

"If I could find more girl midgets who could fulfill the demanding role of wrestlers, I'd hire them," says South Carolina promoter Buddy Lee, master of his little girls' fates. But the work is hard and few of the little ladies are tough enough to withstand the gaff.

"Girl midgets – both in and out of wrestling," says Lee, "seem to have a happier life than the boys. Their childhood is usually; after all, how can you be cruel or unkind to a little living doll? You don't think of them as freaks, or abnormal; you think of them as cute, and quaint. You treat them better."

This doesn't mean that the lives of girl midgets are all peaches and cream. Sometimes it's pizzas and sour cream. They're plagued by a sex problem too. Many a wolf and degenerate who hasn't the guts to try his luck with women his size tries to take advantage of the little gals, thinking they may be hungry enough to be easy marks. He always fails – and often gets into big trouble. A word to the wise guys – leave them alone.

So there they are, the midgets, who call themselves "The Little People." Too often we see them with only half an eye – we see that they're little; we tend to forget that they're real people. But they are, and many of them are bigger people than those of us who recoil away from them. Shunned by the normal society that looks upon them as freaks, they strive to find acceptance in a world that offers them only cruelty and ridicule. They find acceptance in wrestling. There, with the bright lights glaring down upon them, they are, for the moment, as big and important as those around them; they are center stage, the big stars of the show.

For the moment. Only for the moment. After the lights are darkened and the cheers of the crowd have settled with the resin dust, the midgets go their lonely way, back to the desolate hotel rooms and cramped station wagons. Back to the bitter memories and scarred hopes, the burning frustration and the quiet agony.

Until next day, a hundred miles away, there is suddenly another bright ring and another cheering crowd, and once more they can reign supreme in the world of the big people, and they will scream out their ringing challenge, their cry of final triumph:

"Look up at me! I'm ten feet tall, do you hear? Can't you see? **I'm ten feet tall!"** •

THE YEAR OF The

She made a terrifying sight with her grief-lined face and glittering bald head. Fans abused her and yelled for her destruction. She didn't have a friend in the world. It is regrettable that nobody understood the real tragedy.

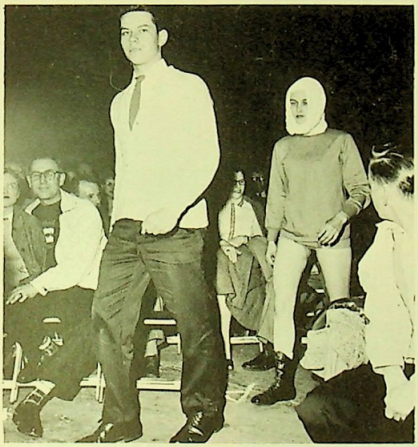
Yulie, her face heavily made-up, snarls for our cameraman before a bout.

THE WRESTLING FANS of Chicago didn't know it at the time – they still don't, but about three years ago they were a part of one of the great love stories of this century. A tragic story, a happy story – a wrestling story.

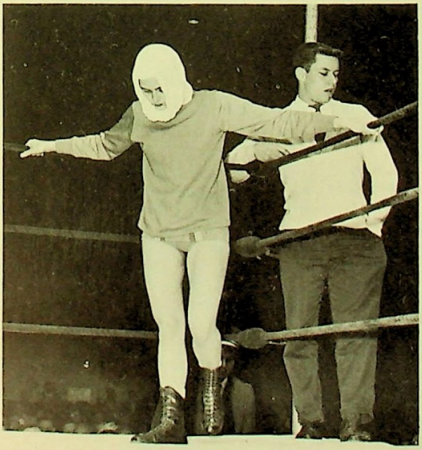
What the fans saw was this: a lean, lanky, well-muscled woman, dressed in bright striped wrestling togs, stalking rings around Chicago week after week. The lines of grief and tragedy were etched on her face, particularly her eyes. She made horrible faces and thrust her lower jaw far forward to make herself as ugly as possible. This wasn't hard to do.

For what made this woman a thing of horror was the fact that she was completely bald. With her white head shining beneath the glare of the ring lights she would approach her opponents with murder in her eyes. And usually she came close to achieving it. The career of more than one girl wrestler was interrupted by trips to the hospital when they encountered this sadistic creature. She was not just rough – she could wrestle, and this insured victory more often than not.

THE TIGRESS
Yulie Brynner Story



Her head covered with a towel, she follows one of her seconds toward the ring in Chicago.



Nervous as usual before a match, Brynner waits in her corner to be introduced.

They called her Yulie Brynner, although no one ever knew her real name. For a full year she set the Midwest wrestling world on its collective ear. People thronged the arenas just to hiss and boo her. She was hated by men and women alike. "She is," they agreed, "a beast!"

Then, one day, Yulie Brynner, nicknamed "The Tigress of the Mat," suddenly disappeared. She never again appeared in the ring, was never discussed by other wrestlers nor seen by the fans. It was as though the earth had opened and swallowed her up. "Someone got to her, at last," was the general verdict. "How long could she go on wrecking other wrestlers like that? They got to her with a knife or a gun."

We heard about the story and, while in Chicago, looked up Fred Kohler, who had promoted most of Yulie Brynner's matches. We had watched her the night she upended Rose Roman, tossing her five times and winning the match. Never had Roman, one of the very best woman wrestlers, been so badly defeated. We didn't believe that Brynner had been assassinated. The police would have known about it.

We asked Kohler to straighten us out. "Where," we asked, "is Yulie Brynner?"

Kohler leaned back in his chair and blew smoke rings at the ceiling. "I guess I can tell you now," he said. "Yulie wouldn't mind. At this late stage, no one can possibly guess her identity."

We waited. "We had a feeling we were on the track of something

(continued on next page)

different. And we were right.

"Several years ago," began Fred, "a young Chicago woman was about to marry a handsome, well-to-do man. They had been engaged for some time. The girl was quite good looking, with long blonde hair. One day her fiancee went out of town on business. That night she got a telegram asking her to drive to his parents' home for the week-end. He would meet her there. She set off in her own car. She was happy, happier than she'd ever been. In a week she would be married to the most wonderful guy in the world.

"She was so happy, so filled with thoughts of the future, that she didn't see the gasoline truck that suddenly loomed out of the darkness. It had stopped for repairs and the driver had not yet had time to put out flares.

"She crashed into the rear end of the truck, a glancing blow, but it was enough to turn her car over. Flames shot up. By the time they dragged the girl clear, her head was badly burned, her hair completely gone. At the hospital, the doctors said her face would be all right but the scar tissue would prevent her hair from ever growing back.

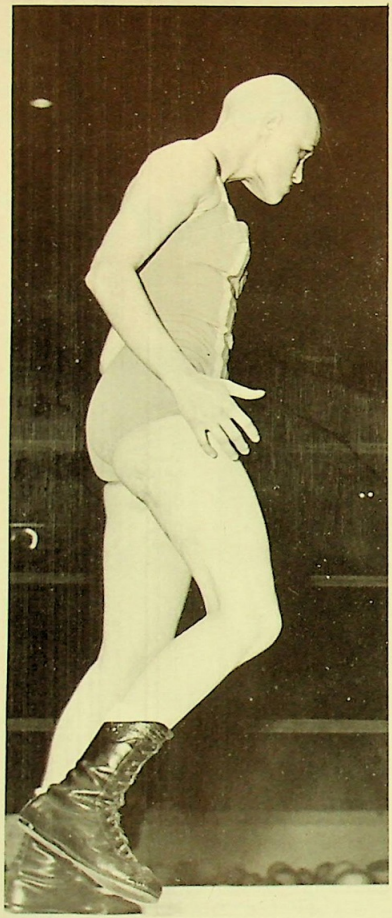
"From happiness she was plunged into despair. Her beauty was gone forever.

"For awhile she considered suicide. But she had too much courage for that. One day, after reading a story about women wrestlers in the Chicago Tribune, she made a decision. She felt she would go insane if she continued brooding about her fate, she had to get rid of her tensions. Maybe wrestling was the answer. She had a strong body, was an excellent swimmer, and had played the most rugged games in school.

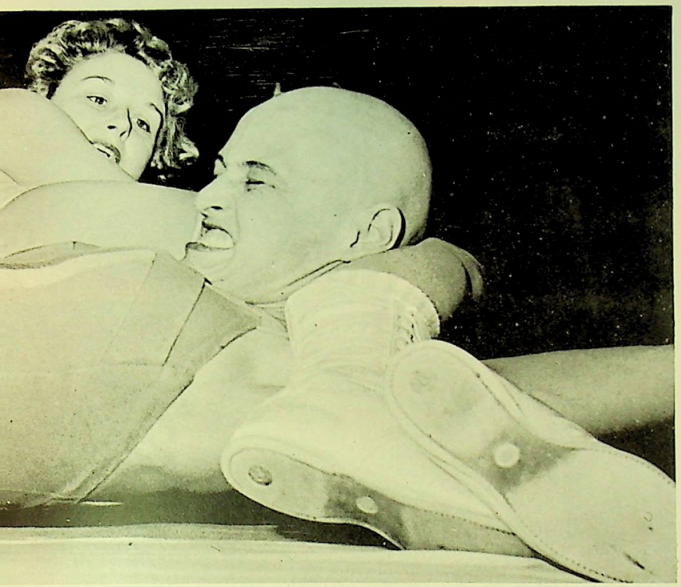
"She called my office," promoter Kohler continued. "We arranged an appointment. She didn't tell me all of her story just then. That came later. All I knew was that she wanted to be a wrestler. So I gave her a chance and she proved to be good. Her technique wasn't so hot but she had more determination and guts than anyone I've ever seen. It was fantastic, almost scary, to see her tear into huskier girls, veterans like Rose Roman, and rip them apart. That's why they called her the 'tigress.' And she was such a nice kid out of the ring.

"No doubt about it, she was getting even with the world for all her misery. Who could blame her? Well, I'm no psychiatrist so I couldn't help her much. I could just get her matches and let her fight it out with herself. Meanwhile she was a great draw."

Now Kohler smiled as he came to the happy part of the story. "One day I took a blind chance. I happen to know a dermatologist from New York. He was in Chicago and he came by to see me. A

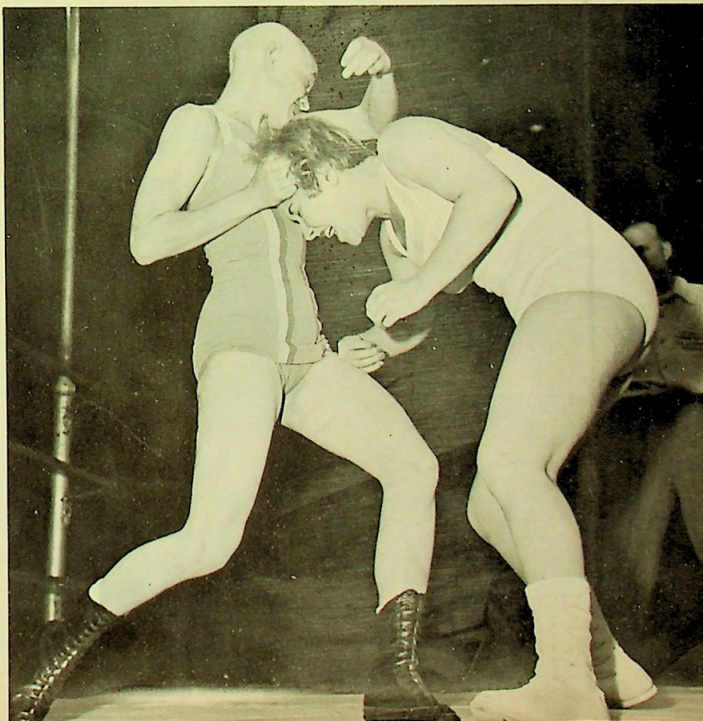


Yulie as she looked to the crowd. Notice the bad scars on her legs which she will wear for the remainder of her life.



Rose Roman clamps Yulie in this reverse scissors and punished her badly. She managed to free herself after about three very tense minutes of agony.

Brynner was an exceptionally dangerous foe for any opponent. Here she pulls Roman's hair and at the same time gets set to slam her arm down on Rose's neck.

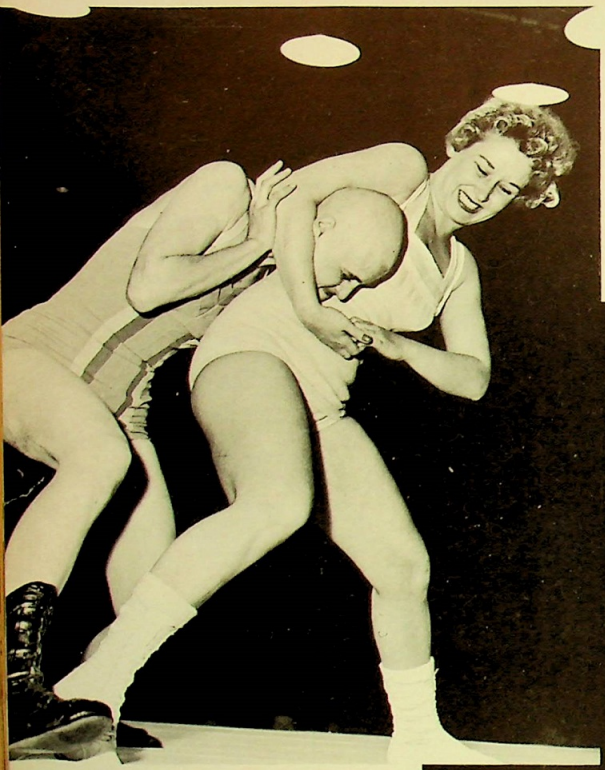


real wrestling fan, too. I asked him to take a look at Yulie. He did. His verdict? Get rid of that scar tissue and she had a chance to grow new hair – and happiness. Provided it wasn't too late. Provided the scar tissue was only on her head and not on her heart.

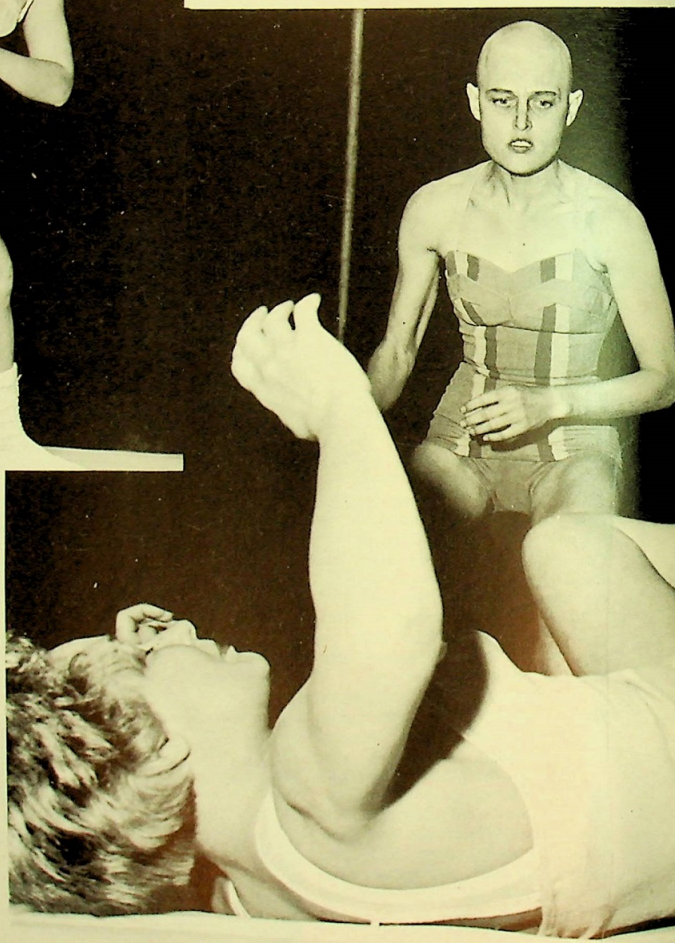
"Yulie said no, forget it. That was in September. She kept on wrestling. I decided to mind my own business from then on.

"But then, about a month later, Yulie showed up at my office and said she would let my doctor friend operate.

"I guess I don't have to tell you the rest. The operation was a success. By January Yulie had an all-over coat of fuzz on her skull, and a few months after that, she showed up with the cutest crew cut you ever saw. *(continued)*



Roman found it impossible to hold Yulie in a headlock for any length of time. She was able to easily free herself because of her smooth head.



"Today? Well, Yulie has the first of, she says, six bouncy baby boys. She's one of the prettiest young matrons in Chicago, thanks in part to a lovely head of silky blonde hair. She says she's going to let it grow right down to her shoulders.

"As for me – well, I lost a wrestler, but I gained a daughter, practically. Yulie and her husband visit me regularly. She says she owes everything to me. She's wrong, of course. She owes it all to herself." •

You might not agree that this is a victory smile, but it is what our photographer got when he asked Brynner for one in dressing room after the bout.

Yulie sets Roman up for the kill with vicious body slam. It was then just a routine matter to pounce on her for the final victory.

The incident related herewith should serve as fair warning to those of us who think we can lick the stuffing out of any of those strutting pro wrestlers.

A MIGHTY ROAR From BEARCAT

ONE OF OUR FAVORITE PEOPLE is Ed "Bearcat" Wright, Jr., who was born in Omaha, Nebraska, no matter what his friends tell you – and who is one of the best wrestlers in the country, no matter what his enemies tell you. At last count, Bearcat had only two enemies in the entire world. He got them this way:

After a recent match in New York's Madison Square Garden, where he was one of the headliners along with other top stars like Rocca, Rogers and the Kangaroos, the 6 foot 6 Wright left the arena and headed for the parking lot on West 48th Street. He had a match in Washington, next day, and so wanted to get an early start. He didn't notice the two men who followed him into the lot. He noticed them only after he got into his car and they sidled up to the door. "You going somewhere, big man?"

Right away Wright knew he was in for trouble. He knew it from the tone of the voice, the looks of the two guys and the smell of liquor on their breath. Both were big and they had scar tissue above their eyes. Ex-fighters.

"You can't be in this business very long," explains Bearcat, "without running into somebody like that sooner or later. Some wrestlers have it all the time; others, like me, just now and then. The only time it's real bad is when they have knives and know how to use them. This was one of those times."

What made it especially unpleasant was that it was after midnight and there was no attendant on the lot. West of 8th Avenue you're in Hell's Kitchen, one of the toughest neighborhoods in New York – and the world. A scream of agony or the sound of shots attract about as much attention as a sneeze or a laugh.

"I tried to talk my way out of it," Wright explained a few days later, "but these guys meant business. It wasn't robbery they had on their minds – just trouble. They didn't like me. Unfortunately, there are still a few people around who don't like Negroes who are bigger, stronger and who make more money than they do. I thought of closing the window and driving out from under them, but there were cars surrounding me. When one of them reached in and gave me the back of his hand in the mouth, I knew there was only one thing I could do. Also, I had to do it quietly. Remember, even when he's in the right, a wrestler can't afford to get in a street fight. His hands are considered lethal weapons. At this time, understand, I didn't know the two trouble-makers were shiv boys. But I found out real quick."

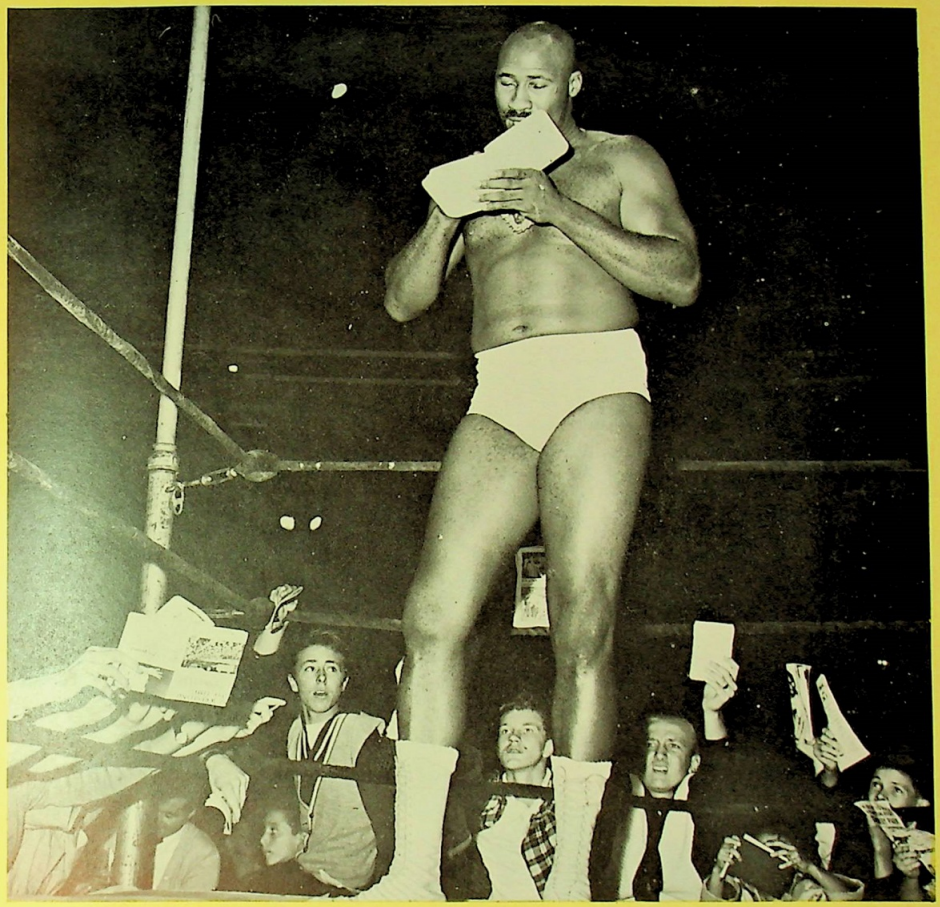
Bearcat started to get out of the car. Since he carries 280 pounds on his massive frame, it's tough for him to get out of even his big Cadillac. As he leaned forward to clear the roof, the nearest thug brought up a hard uppercut that glanced off the big fellow's forehead. The other tried a judo chop to the back of the neck. Fortunately the close quarters cramped their style. Wright didn't fool around. He barrelled out of that car like a flyweight, arms flying and legs pumping like pistons.

That's when they pulled the knives. One hauled out a switch blade and the other a short hunting knife. For a split second it looked bad for Bearcat. . . . But what these two ill-advised tough guys didn't understand – what, in fact, the average person doesn't understand – is the calibre of fighting machine that makes up a pro wrestler. Their strength is unbelievable, and their reflexes are several times faster than those of most people.

Using their muscles and nerves almost nightly, pitting their physical recourses to the utmost against one another for up to an hour, plus workouts in between, gives these athletes a superiority incomprehensible to most of us. Anyone who has engaged in horseplay with one of these pros – as has the writer – quickly learns the score.

The two thugs learned it too – and fast. Bearcat seized the knife arm of the nearest one and yanked him forward. As the other rushed in with the switch blade poised, Wright lifted his companion as if he were a child and hurled him like a basketball. Both men fell in a struggling, cursing heap. The mighty arm of Wright rose and fell twice, like a trip hammer. One of them lapsed into unconsciousness. Another karate blow and the nose of the other wise guy collapsed with a crumpling sound. Bearcat picked this one up and threw him clear over the roof of a nearby car. The last Wright saw of him he was racing away between the parked cars like a deer.

Bearcat Wright, his breathing back to normal, nonchalantly started his car and casually drove out of the lot. The entire ruckus had lasted about thirty seconds, and almost no sound had been made. Probably no greater testimonial to the enormous fighting ability of these pro wrestlers has



The enormously popular Bearcat is swamped by autograph seekers in N. Y. arena.

been made in recent years. They happen from time to time but, as in this case, they go unrecorded due to the wrestler's knack of keeping them quiet and ending them quickly.

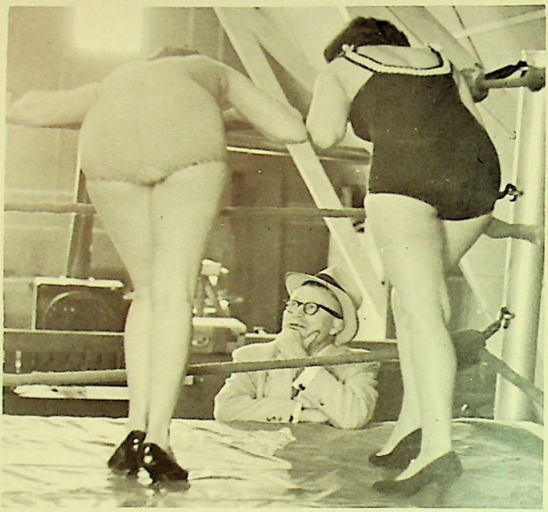
Because Bearcat Wright is a modest young (28) man, this particular incident would never have come to light but for one thing — there was a witness. A private cop, passing the lot at that moment, saw it all happen. By the time he walked the hundred feet from the sidewalk to the scene of action — it was over. As Wright's car passed him, the cop nodded. "Nice work, Bearcat." Next day the officer called WRESTLING REVUE and told us the story. We checked it out with Bearcat, and here you are.

We print it for two reasons; 1. To reveal an interesting sidelight in the life of a popular wrestling hero; 2. To save lives — the lives of potential trouble-makers who feel they must prove their own manhood by picking on famous personalities whom they envy. These pro wrestlers are incredibly strong men who, as is proved every time, are more than a match for any two or three ordinary men. So let this little parable serve as a warning to wise guys the world over: be wise. Don't mess around with wrestlers.

Especially Bearcat Wright. ●

BEARCAT WRIGHT

WRESTLING REVUE'S PIN UP SERIES / NUMBER 6



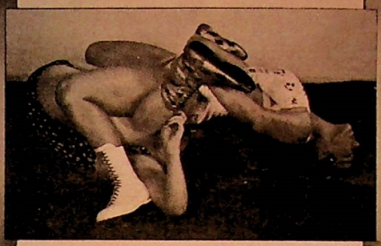
Wolfe instructs two of his girls in a Columbus, Ohio, gymnasium.

BILLY WOLFE'S NEW SENSATION

In a letter to Publisher Stanley Weston, the man who invented girl wrestling and discovered its greatest stars, tells about 18-year old Karen Kellogg, a young lady he claims will someday win the world championship.

Billy Wolfe's new sensation Karen Kellogg.

June Byers, World's Champion



June Byers, the one and only World Champion Girl Wrestler, pinning her opponent with her own developed "Byers Bridge", which is the most spectacular pin in wrestling history.

June Byers, World's Champion

Direct All Correspondence To

Billy Wolfe

PARK HOTEL
465 SOUTH HIGH ST., COLUMBUS 15, OHIO
PHONE CA. 4-9257

December 22, 1961

Mr. Stanley Weston
545 Fifth Ave., New York 17, N. Y.

Dear Stanley;

Thank you for your letter of December 11th. As always, it was a pleasure to hear from you and to learn of the fabulous success Wrestling Revue is enjoying. Everybody in the wrestling business agrees, and rightly so, that your magazine is unquestionably the finest publication our gentry has ever had. You and your staff deserve the gratitude of us all.

I think this is an opportune time for me to tell you about a young lady who in my opinion will soon develop into the greatest female wrestler in history. Her name is Karen Kellogg and I can assure you that you will be hearing a great deal about her in the near future.

Karen weighs only 118 pounds, but I venture to say that there isn't a woman in the world within fifty pounds of her weight who can pin her. Karen is dazzling fast, very strong, and she has learned the finer points of the sport faster than any girl I have ever developed with the possible exception of my famous all-time champion, the great Mildred Burke.

Karen is eighteen years old. Yes, I said 18. I realize that's young in so tough a business, but I think you know me well enough, Stanley, to know that I would never even think of putting so young a girl into the ring unless I was absolutely certain that she could take good care of herself . . . which she certainly can.

Karen Kellogg was born and raised in Charles City, Iowa. She is the oldest of five children and a high school graduate. Her parents wanted her to study at an Iowa business school to prepare herself for a secretarial career. But when the Kellogg family bought a television set, and Karen saw a few girl wrestling bouts, she would hear of no other career but one as a professional wrestler.

Karen is a good talker. She even convinced her father she was right. So he financed her training on the condition that she would pay him back when she earned enough in her new career. I predict that Mr. Kellogg will be repayed, with interest.

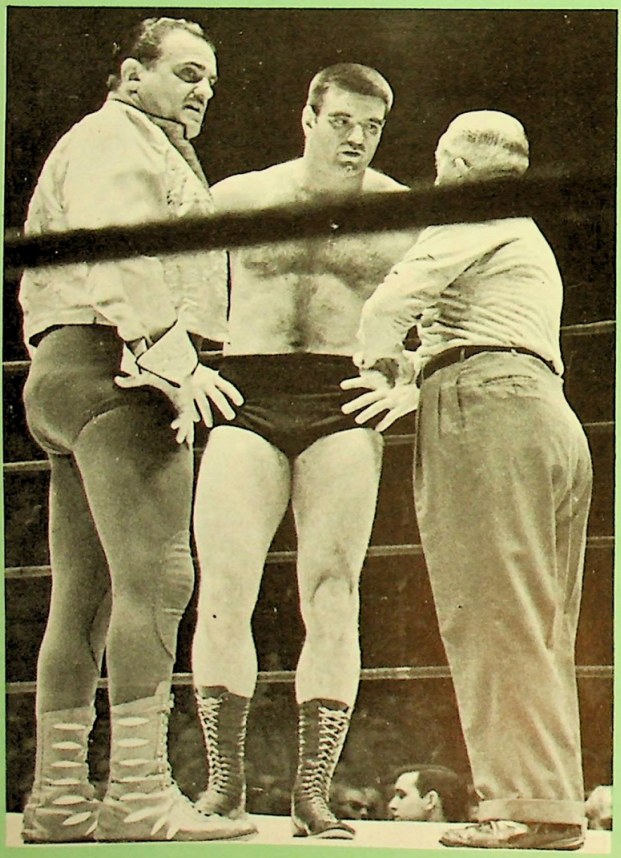
So there you have it, Stanley, I wanted you to be the first to know about my new find. It wouldn't be long before the whole world knows about Karen Kellogg, and calling her another Mildred Burke, which is the highest tribute any female wrestler can hope to get.

With every best wish for the continued success to your brilliantly-done magazines.

Yours very truly,
Billy Wolfe

Another Great Night At The Garden

Don Curtis, center, and Mighty Atlas listen to referee's instructions before bout.



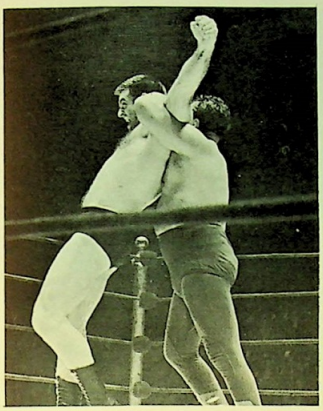
DON CURTIS VS. THE MIGHTY ATLAS

THE STORY went this way: a Madison Square Garden usher forced his way through the crowd and whispered something into the ear of the man seated behind the box-office cage. The man listened carefully and then looked out at the milling throng that jammed the lobby and the street outside.

"You —" he pointed to a four-foot midget far back in the impatient line waiting to buy tickets. "— come on up here! You're the last one in!" The crowd moaned. "He's way back in line. How come he gets in?

The ticket man shrugged. "Because the Fire Commissioner says there's no room inside for anybody except a midget." He slammed his window shut with a crash and the midget happily trotted through the gate into paradise. Angrily, the rest of the crowd slowly straggled away.

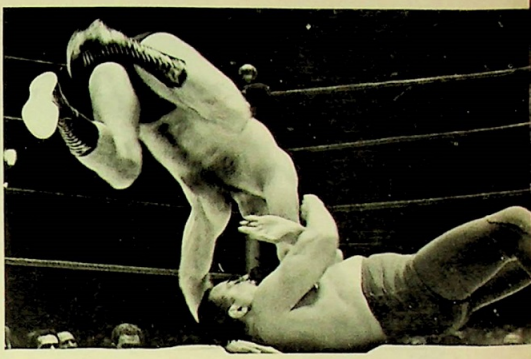
(text continued on page 42)

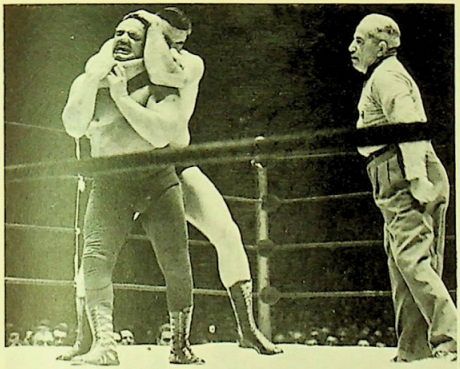


Left: Curtis is caught in Atlas' favorite hold, the "Atlas Nelson."

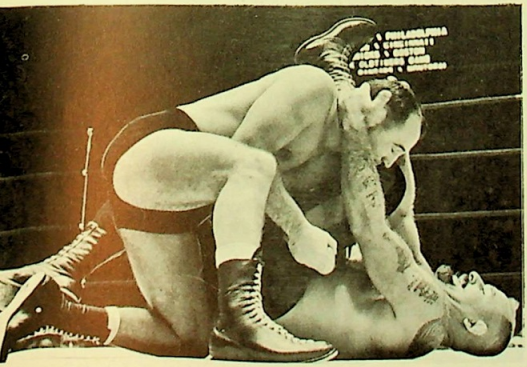
Right: After dropping Atlas to the canvas, Curtis leaps at him in an unsuccessful try for a pin.

Below: Atlas is clamped in Don's favorite, the "Sleeper." But he managed to break free. Bout went to a 15 minute draw decision.





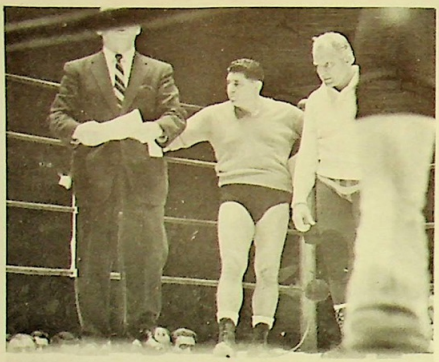
KARL VON HESS VS. DOUG KINSLOW



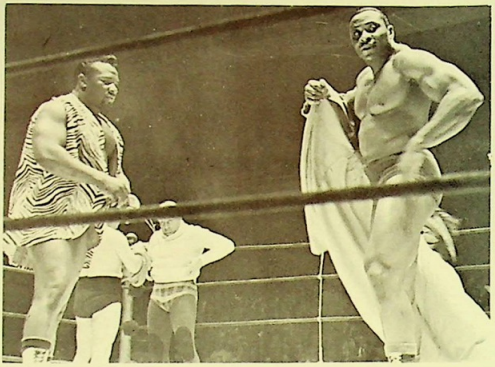
Above: Hated German Karl Von Hess started second bout of evening by trying to rip off Doug Kinslow's nose.

Left: Von Hess breaks Kinslow's leg-split by twisting his head.

Right: Hess goes flying through the air as Doug executes flying scissors. But the German won bout in 9:35.



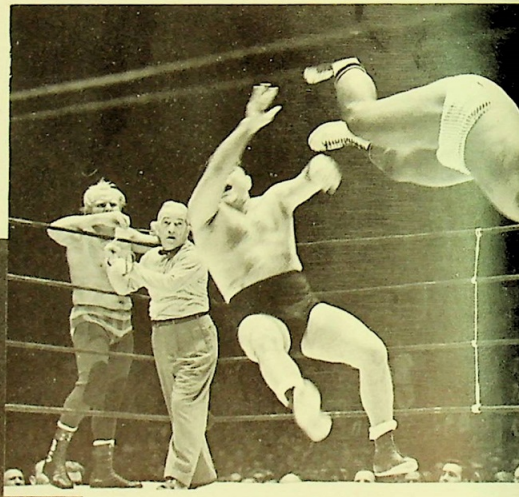
Villain team composed of Angelo Savoldi, left, and Great Scott await their introduction to vast Garden throng.

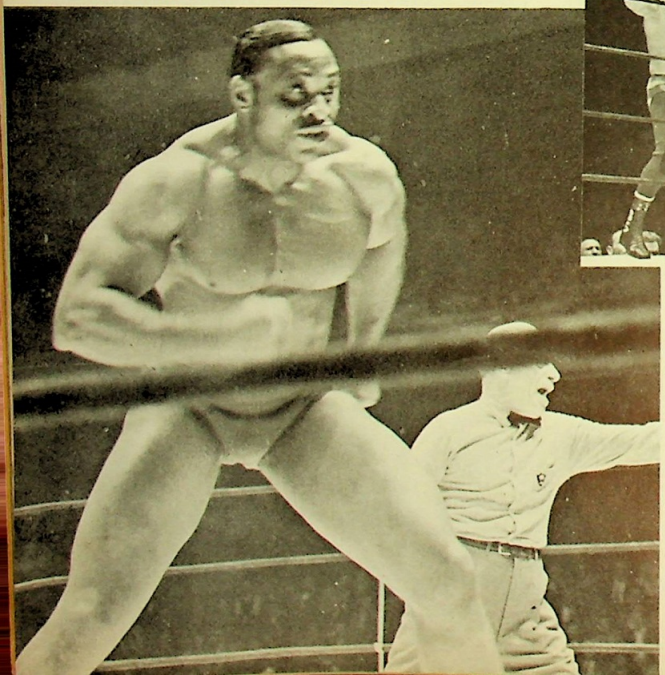


In opposite corner, hero team of Sweet Daddy Siki, left, and the mighty Art Thomas acknowledge crowds cheers as Scott eyes them.

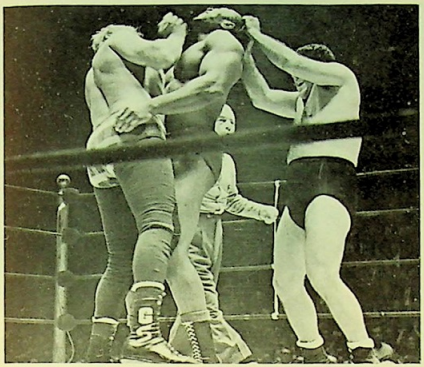
SAILOR ART THOMAS and SWEET DADDY SIKI VS. THE GREAT SCOTT and ANGELO SAVOLDI

Thomas, his face twisted into a snarl, his great muscles tensed, bulls in toward Angelo Savoldi after Angelo kicked him.

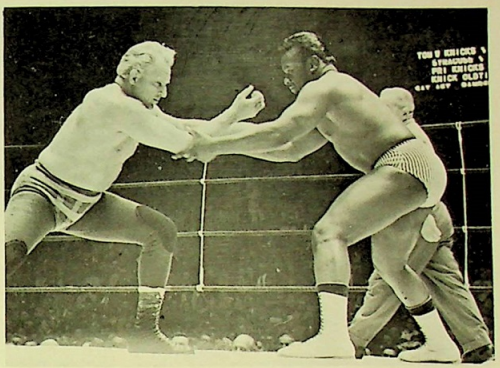




Inside, the midget and 20,252 others were again reminded why wrestling holds such a tremendous attraction for people of all ages and in all walks of life. They saw what the New York State Athletic Commission calls, with ill-concealed contempt, "An exhibition." Yet the average crowd for a Madison Square Garden boxing show is only about 3,000, and all the famous Archie Moore could attract for his last title defense in the Garden was less than 10,000.



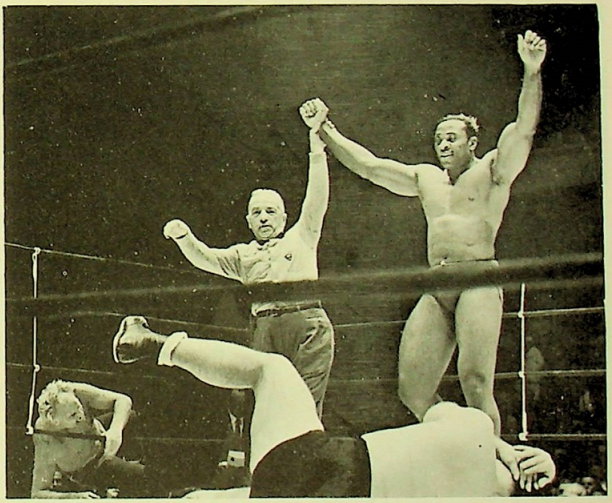
Thomas is caught in dangerous trap as Scott, left, and Savoldi gang up on him. Referee warns Savoldi to stop.



The great Scott, left, one of wrestling's real old pros, carefully sizes up powerful Sweet Daddy before locking horns.

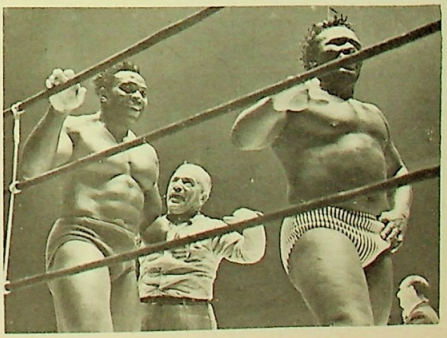
After picture at lower left, opposite page, was taken, Savoldi caught Thomas with a right to the jaw, flooring Art. Immediately Siki leaped to his rescue and drop-kicked Savoldi to floor.

First fall was won by Sailor Thomas when he pinned Savoldi with a body press.



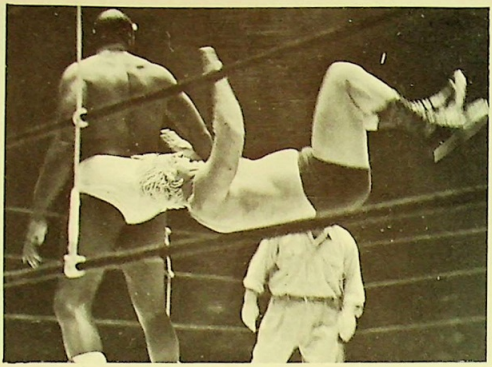
It's the same all over the country – with or without TV – because wrestling gives the fans what they want to see. They **know** they'll see a good show.

Like the one they saw this night of November 13, 1961 at the Garden. The pictures on these pages show why the 20,253 people who paid a whopping $61,955 to get in will show up again for the next show, forming long lines in front of the ticket cages, anxious to lay down their money.

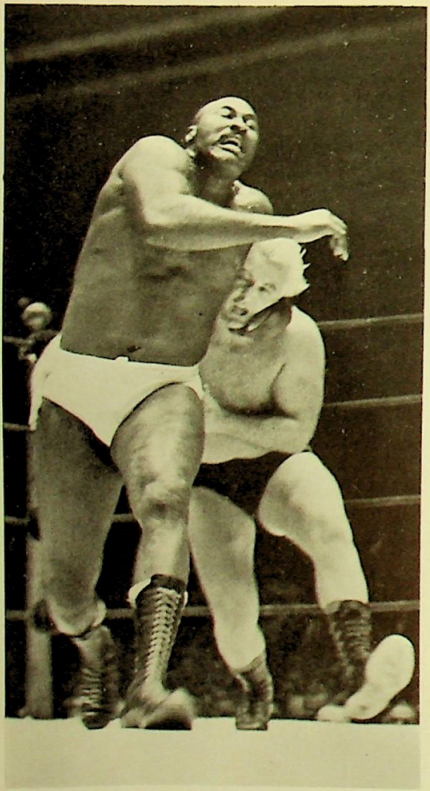


Thomas, left, and his partner, trot happily back to their corner after winning second fall and the match.

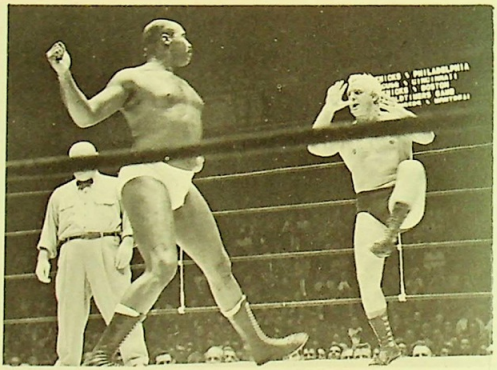
BEARCAT WRIGHT VS. EDDIE GRAHAM



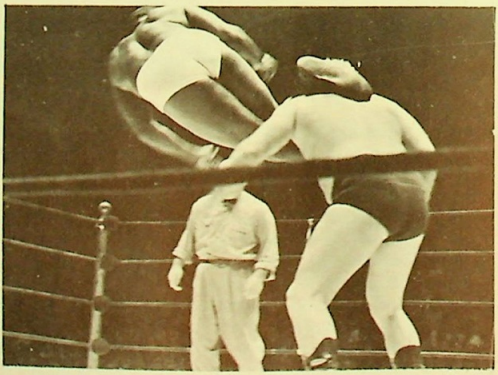
Bearcat Wright seems to be walking away as Eddie Graham is suspended in mid-air. Actually, Wright upset Eddie with an armlock.



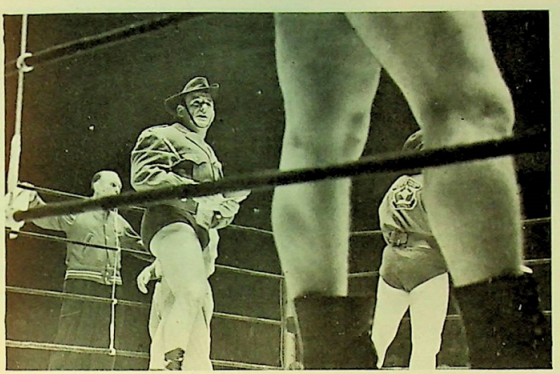
Graham uses all his strength to catapult the massive Bearcat across the ring and into the ropes.



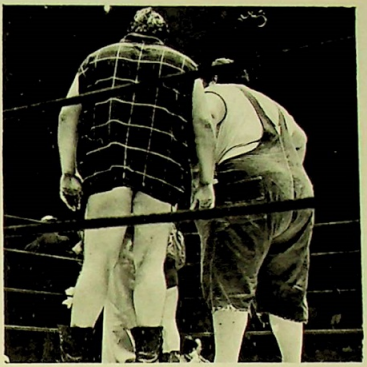
Most hilarious bit of the evening was Eddie Graham's mocking of Bearcat's famous bump and grind strut. Even Wright had to laugh.



Spectacular flying head scissors caught Graham off guard and set him up for the kill. Wright won the match in 9:04.

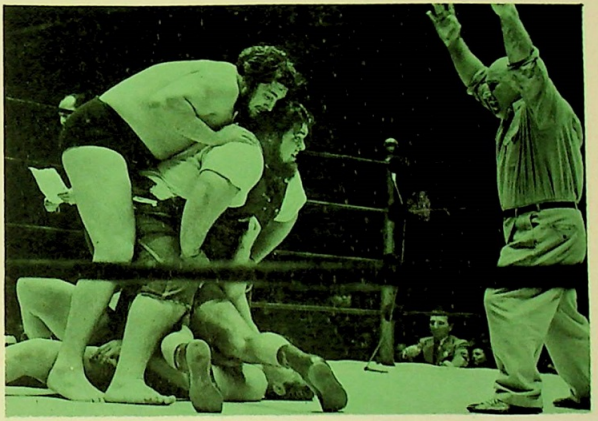


Al Costello of the famed Fabulous Kangaroos eyes opponents across the ring. Kangaroo manager Wild Red Berry stands outside ring at the left.

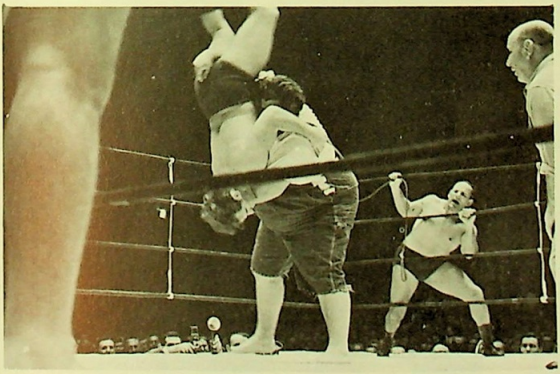


Man Mountain Campbell, left, and Haystacks Calhoun await referee's instructions.

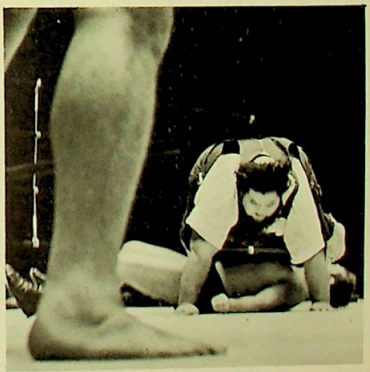
THE FABULOUS KANGAROOS VS. HAYSTACKS CALHOUN and MAN MOUNTAIN CAMPBELL



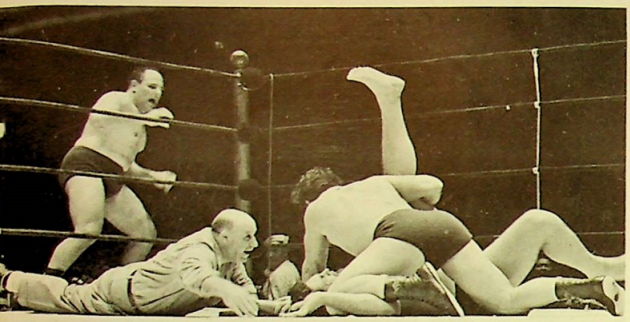
Campbell and Calhoun drop their combined weight of 921 pounds on the Kangaroos.



Al Costello grimaces as he watches his partner, Roy Heffernan, being slammed to canvas by Calhoun. Al then leaped into ring to save Roy.



Calhoun won first fall with body press in 8:49. *To see what happened later in match, turn page.*

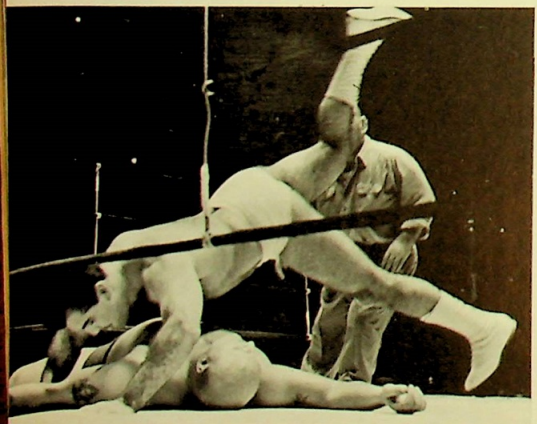


After losing the first fall, The Kangaroos bounced back to win the next two and the match. Here Heffernan pins 320-pound Man Mountain Campbell.

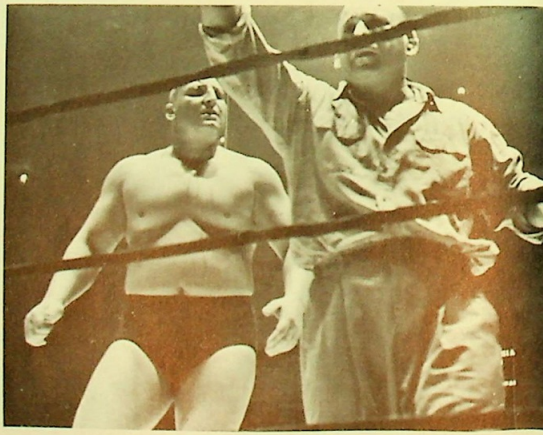
Calhoun, who was upset by Al Costello in third and deciding fall, sits dazed on the floor at the end.

MIGUEL PEREZ VS. SKULL MURPHY

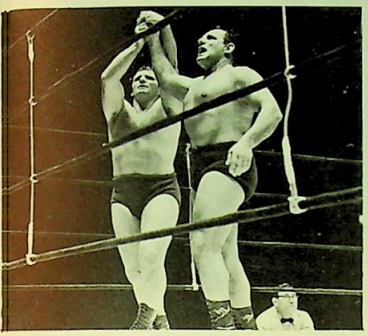
Popular Puerto Rican Miguel Torres jolts tough Skull Murphy with perfect dropkick.



After taking a savage battering, Perez suddenly came to life, softening Skull with drop kicks, then pinned him.

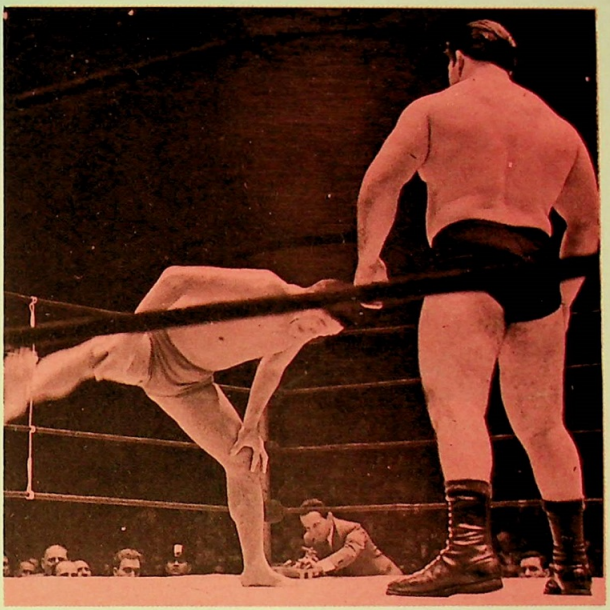


The enraged Murphy, who insisted he was given a "Fast count," rushes after referee Abe Coleman demanding that bout continue.

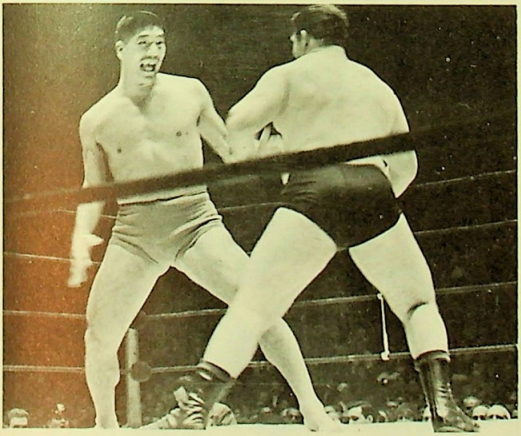


Kangaroos Heffernan, left, and Costello chide angry crowd by signaling victory.

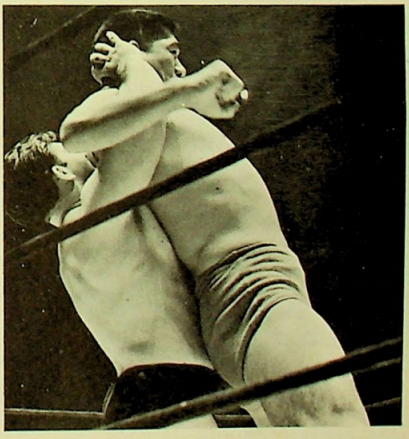
BRUNO SAMMARTINO VS. SHOHEI BABA



Japan's enormous (7'2, 307 pounds) Shohei Baba goes through ancient pre-bout ritual.

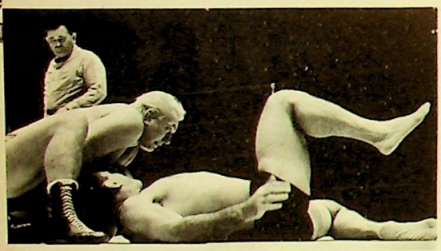


Looking like the Frankenstein Monster, Baba advances menacingly towards Italian strongman Sammartino moments after bout began.



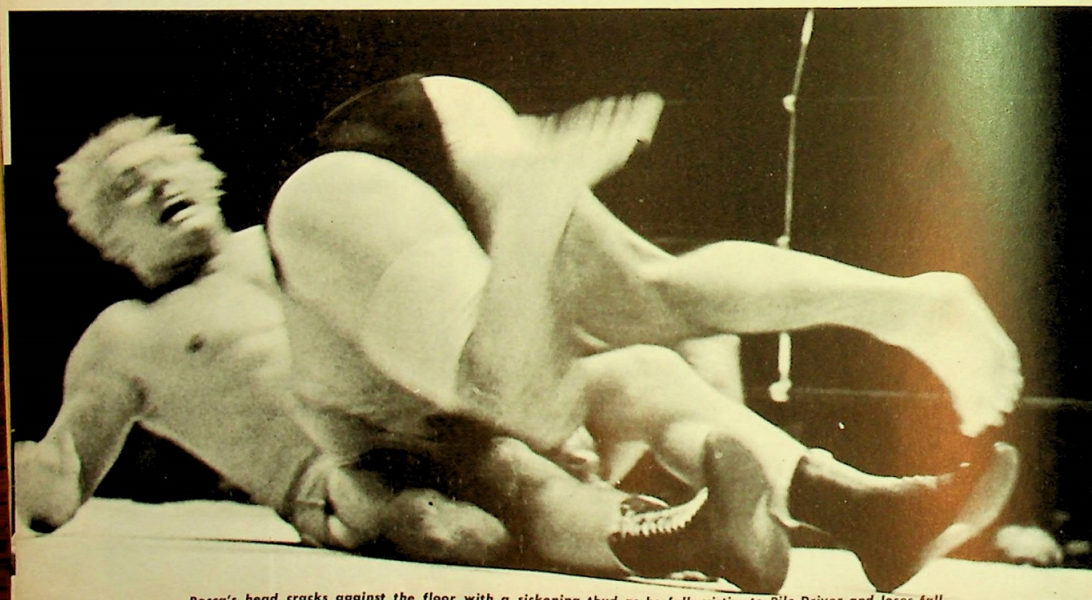
Bruno discovers that his arms are too short to fit around Baba. Bruno was disqualified in 5:42.

BUDDY ROGERS (Champion)
VS.
ANTONINO ROCCA (Challenger)
For The World's
Heavyweight Championship

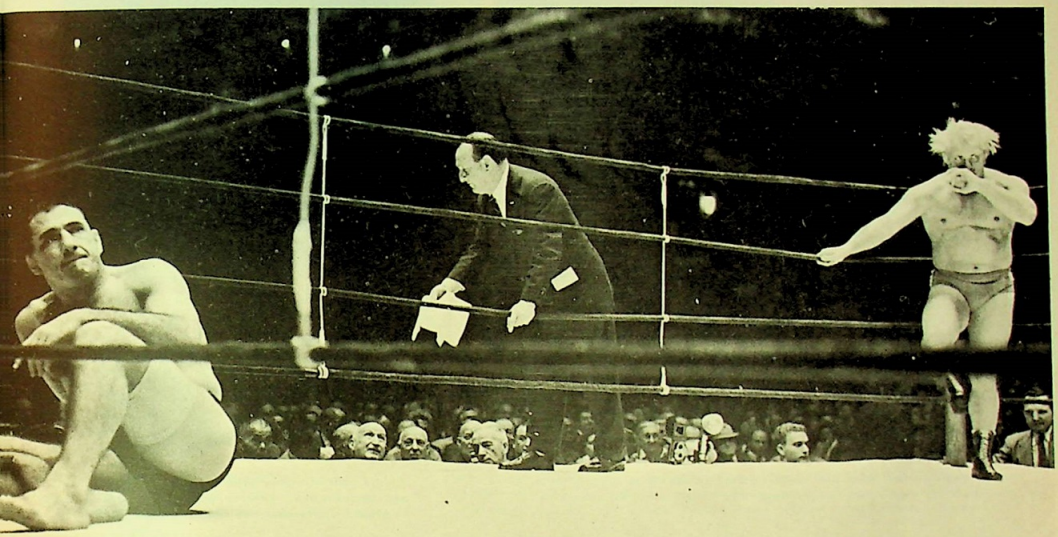


Above: Seconds after bout began Rogers dumped Rocca to floor with a flying mare hold.

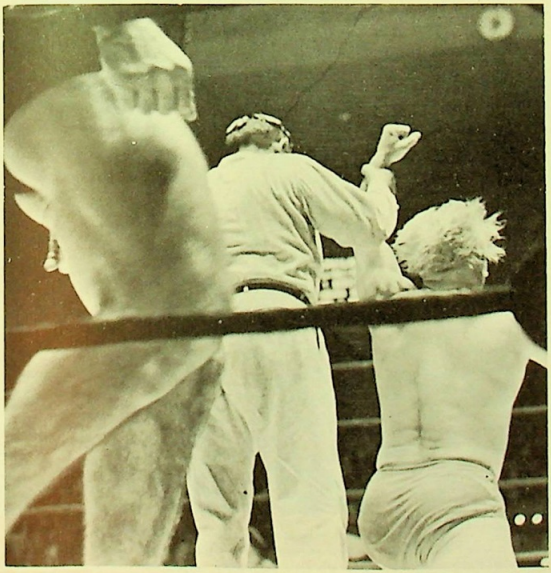
Buddy Rogers, the heavyweight champion of the world, is first to enter the ring for big main event. He wears $10,000 championship belt.

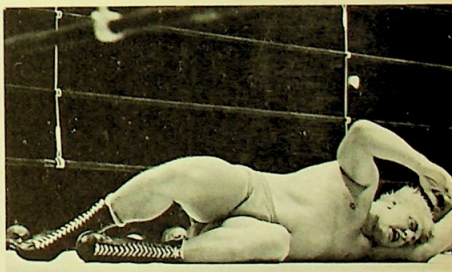


Rocca's head cracks against the floor with a sickening thud as he falls victim to Pile-Driver and loses fall.



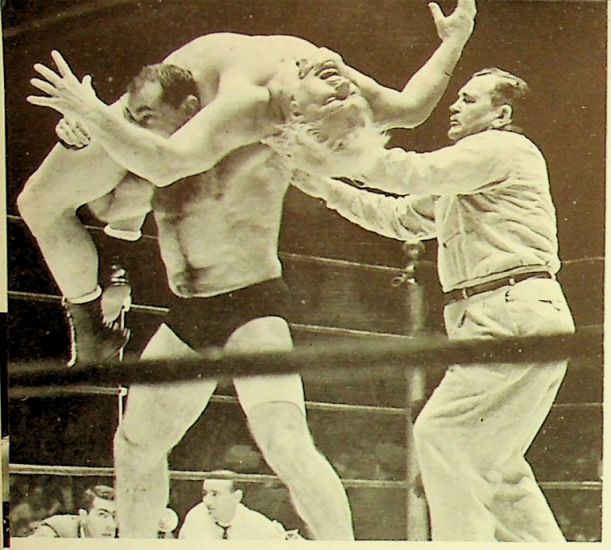
Rocca, disgusted with himself, rests on mat while waiting for second fall to get under way.



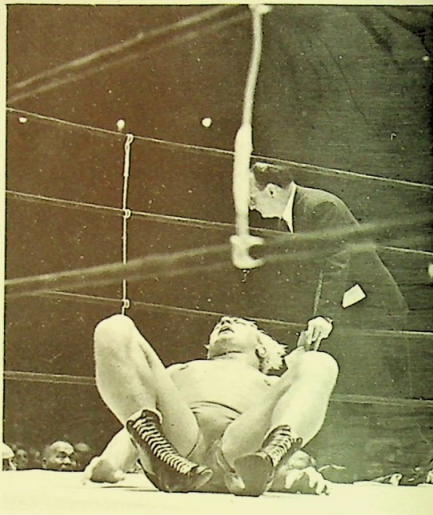


Two and a half minutes after the second fall began Rogers was rolling on the floor in agony after Rocca won the fall with a Back-Breaker.

The champion, claiming that he had been fouled, raises his arm, which the referee tries to push down. The crowd angrily booed Rogers.



As soon as the third and deciding fall began Rocca leaped from his corner and again caught Rogers in his dreaded Back-Breaker.

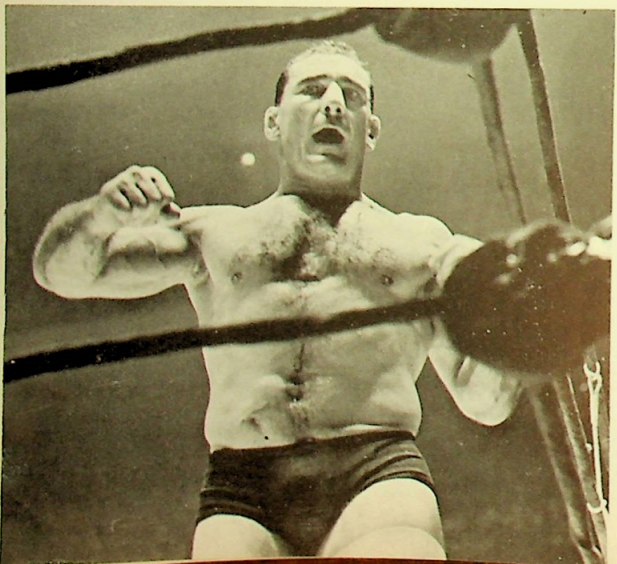


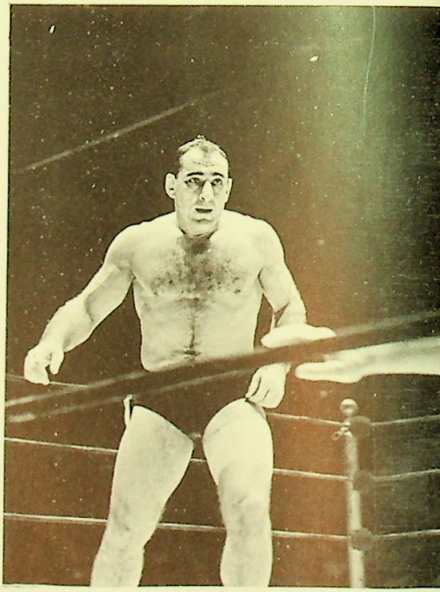
Rogers rolls in agony after suffering effects of that second Back-Breaker. Referee walks over to ask Buddy if he wants a stretcher, which he refused, while the ring

BUDDY ROGERS VS. ANTONINO ROCCA

(continued)

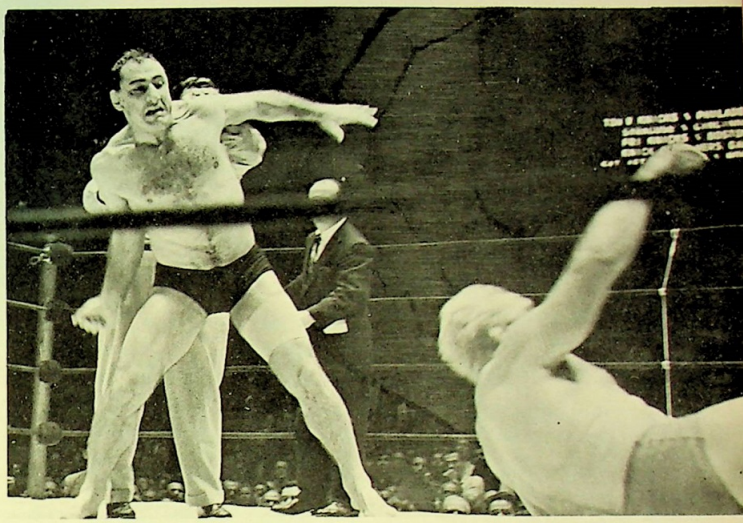
Rocca seemed to go berserk after he won the second fall. He rested a few seconds, then attacked Rogers before the third fall bell sounded. The referee ordered him to stop. When he refused to obey, he was disqualified. Photo below shows him walking back to corner.



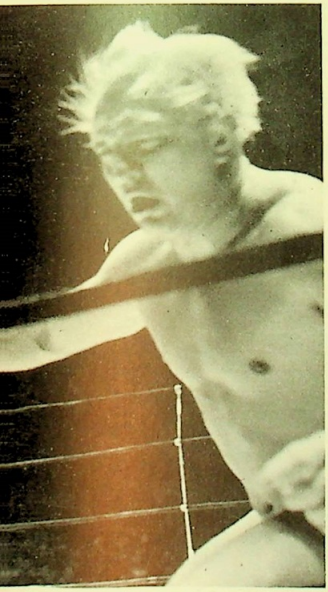


As Buddy struggled to regain his feet, Rocca eyed him for a few seconds, then attacked him again. Photo above shows the stricken champion racing for the protection of the ropes

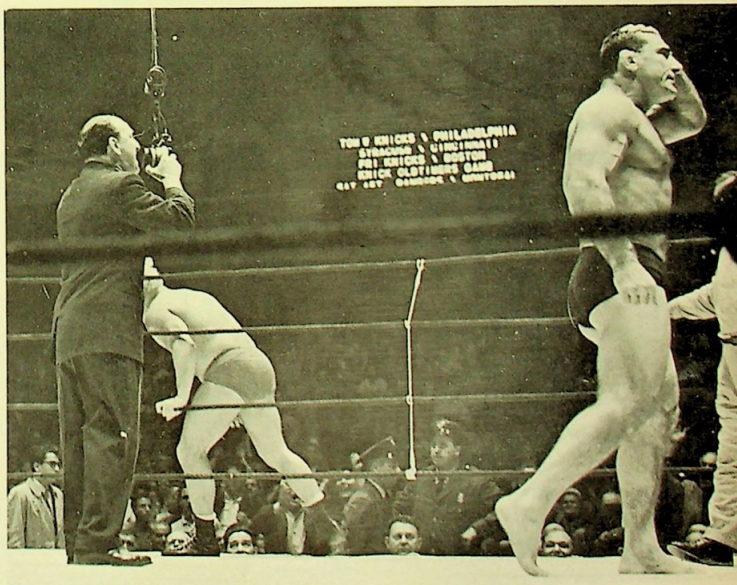
announcer confirms to officials that Rogers is the winner of the match and still world's champion.



After Rocca clubbed Rogers a few times the referee grabbed him and tried to lock his arms behind his back. Only a squad of special policemen, who were signaled into action by the head official, could subdue Rocca.



when he realized that Antonino was still out for murder even though the bout was officially over.



Rocca is finally calmed down, and after apologizing to the referee and his public, he walks dejectedly away as still-champion Rogers leaves the ring from the opposite side. It was the end of a thrilling night at the Garden.

★ WANTED ★

The task of compiling the mass of information that goes into every issue of **W.R.** is an enormous one.

It requires not only the skill of expert writers and analysts, but also a continual flow of the basic information which comes in the form of letters from **W.R.** readers throughout the world as well as clippings from their local newspapers.

You can be of great service to the staff and help produce an even better **W.R.** if you would send us all wrestling stories clipped from your local newspapers.

Your efforts will be greatly appreciated.

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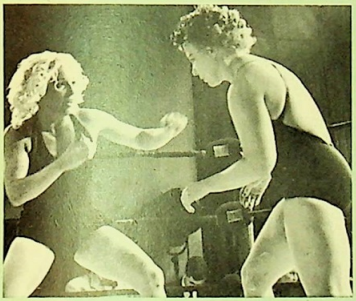
OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS

A POLL OF LEADING PROMOTERS, NEWSMEN
AND THE WRESTLERS THEMSELVES
GUIDED US IN COMPILING THESE RATINGS.

MALE

RAY STEVENS

1 — BUDDY ROGERS
2 — PAT O'CONNOR
3 — RAY STEVENS
4 — VERNE GAGNE
5 — ANTONINO ROCCA
6 — FRED BLASSIE
7 — CRUSHER LISOWSKI
8 — JOHNNY VALENTINE
9 — WILBUR SNYDER
10 — EDOUARD CARPENTIER



LORRAINE JOHNSON AND JUNE BYERS

FEMALE

1 — JUNE BYERS
2 — PENNY BANNER
3 — LORRAINE JOHNSON
4 — JUDY GRABLE
5 — ROSE ROMAN
6 — BONNIE WATSON
7 — ADA ASH
8 — CORA COMBS
9 — KATHY STARR
10 — JUDY GLOVER

TAG TEAMS

ARAKAWA AND SHIBUYA

1 — THE KANGAROOS
2 — DICK STEINBORN & EDDIE GRAHAM
3 — ANTONINO ROCCA & VITTORIO APOLLO
4 — THE BRUNETTIS
5 — THE GALLAGHERS
6 — AL & RAMON TORRES
7 — EDOUARD CARPENTIER & RICKI STARR
8 — MITSU ARAKAWA & KINJI SHIBUYA
9 — SWEET DADDY SIKI & ART THOMAS
10 — DORY FUNK & RICKY ROMERO

MEMO

FROM THE ZEBRA KID IN JAPAN

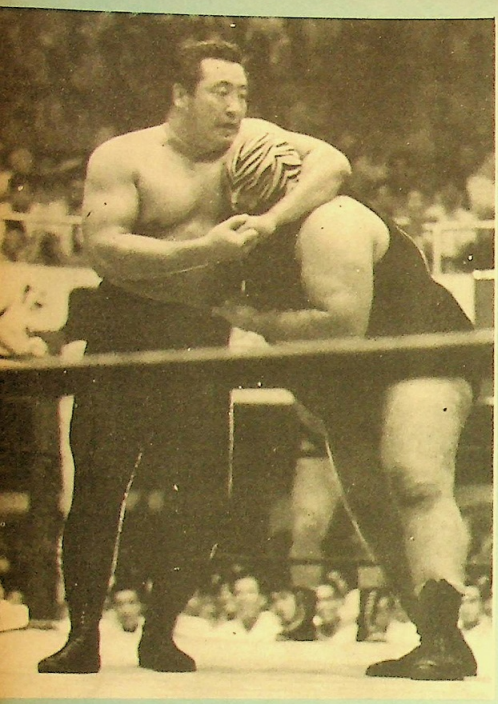
WRESTLING REVUE IN NEW YORK

IT TOOK TWENTY YEARS, but we finally got even with the Japs for Pearl Harbor.

We sent them the Zebra Kid! It was part of an Oriental tour that took in the entire Pacific area and Asia, but most of the fireworks happened in Nippon. After two months in the Land of the Rising Sun, here are but a few of the things that happened: The eternal snow melted from the top of Fujiyama, causing floods in the valley below; there were three cases of attempted hari-kiri by members of the wrestling profession – shortly before they were to have met the Zebra Kid in the ring; after a typical Zebra Kid match, Japanese scientists pronounced the mat radioactive and had it taken out to sea and sunk!

At least, the above is what George Bollas himself told us. (All right, there will be no more hedging – after three or four dismaskings, too many people know the Kid's real identity to try keeping it a secret any longer. George Bollas – meet the Zebra Kid; Kid – meet George Bollas!)

Below: The Kid walks down street in Hiroshima, Japan. The reproductions at the left were taken from Tokyo newspapers.



The simple truth is that Bollas got along better in Japan than most touring American athletes. They loved him! That is, they loved him when he was wrestling a Japanese villain, and they hated him when he was wrestling a Japanese hero. Which is understandable. Most of the time, no matter who he was wrestling, he beat them. For this huge behemoth of a man knows how to use his 300 pounds to best advantage. The big Sumo wrestlers held no terrors for him; the vaunted judo experts held no terrors for him; the Geisha girls held no terrors for him.

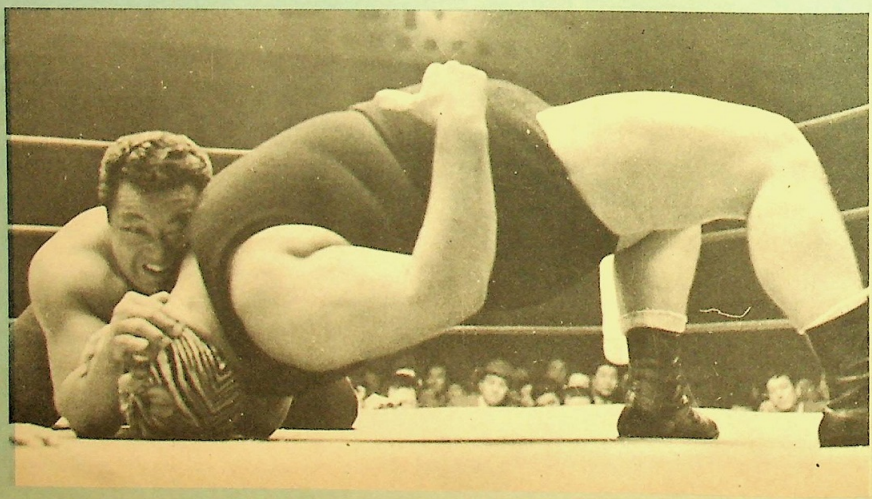
He wasn't even afraid of Rikidozan, the heavyweight champion of Japan. He should have been. In a title match at Osaka, on November 7, 1961, Rikidozan tossed the Kid out of the ring, ripped off his mask and almost ripped off his face as well. That ended the tour – and all but ended the Kid's career.

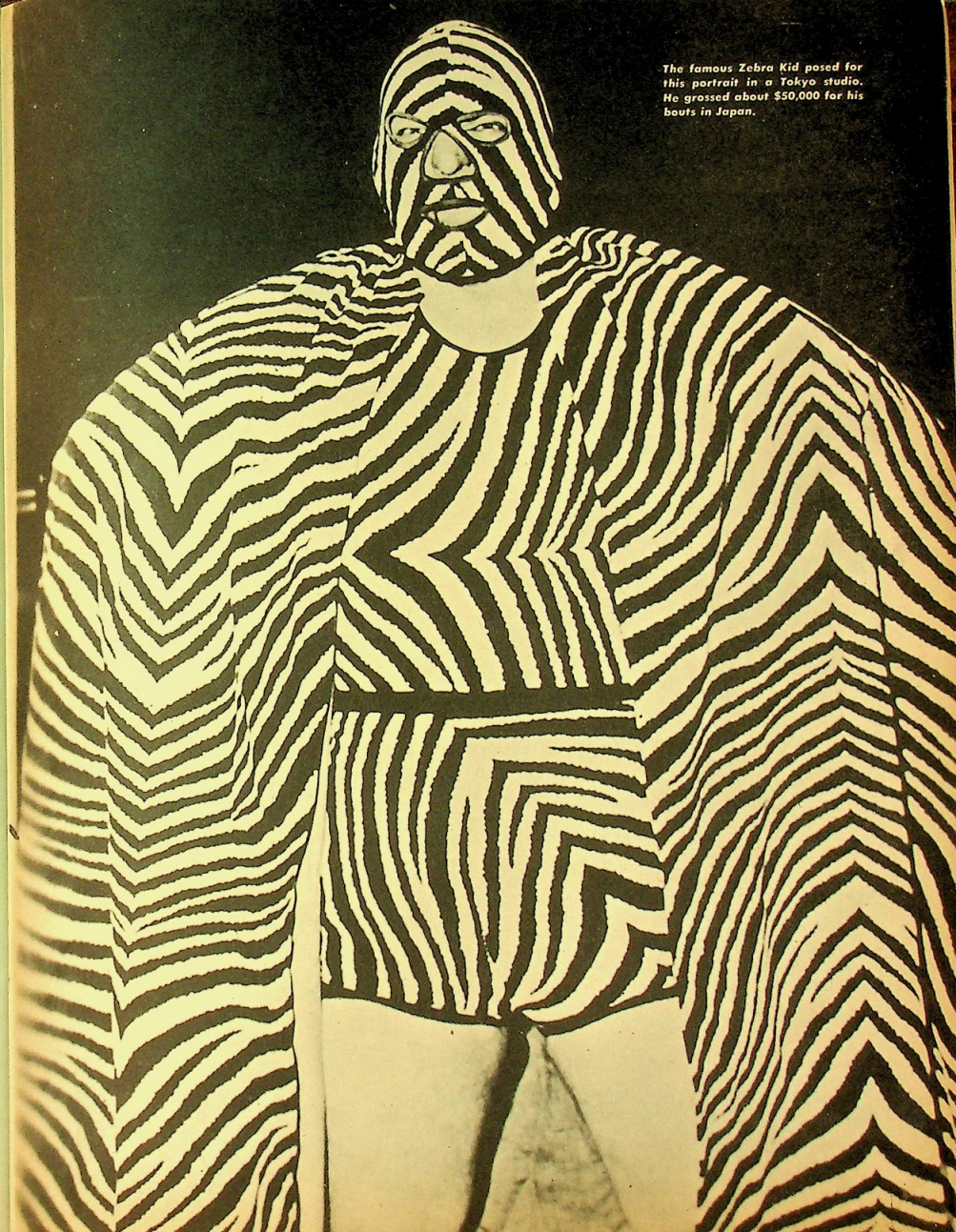
Bollas recovered at sea, arriving in Honolulu recently to engage in a few exhibitions. He has a lot of respect for Japan – and Japan has plenty of respect for him. He covered 90 percent of Japan's major cities, leaving his mark on all but Hiroshima – nothing, not even Bollas, could leave a mark there, even after twenty years. From Honolulu, he sent us a newspaper account of the Rikidozan match. We can't read Japanese, but the pictures tell the story. It must have been quite a match.

Of course, the Zebra Kid is quite a wrestler. It will be good to see him back in action at home once again. ●

Left: Big match at Osaka, Japan on Nov. 7th, 1961, featured great Japanese champion Rickidozan, left, and the Zebra Kid.

Below: The Kid bridges to keep from being pinned. About 18,000 people watched the gruelling struggle.





The famous Zebra Kid posed for this portrait in a Tokyo studio. He grossed about $50,000 for his bouts in Japan.

LUIS MARTINEZ' NIGHT OF REVENGE

★

There is usually one incident in a man's life that is burned forever into

In the case of brilliant matman Luis Martinez the incident took

not long ago with a man we shall call Rough Morgan.

★

The incident that begins this article is factual. However, for the first time in its history, this publication is using a fictitious name for a wrestler – although his description is accurate. We felt that in order to prevent possible action against the man in question, a false name was necessary, as you will see. – THE EDITORS

THE MAIN EVENT at Marigold was about to begin. Promoter Fred Kohler opened the dressing room door and said, "Five minutes, you two – everything all right?"

The two wrestlers looked up and nodded. "Everything is just fine," said the smaller of the two. He was a pleasant-looking Mexican with a beautiful physique that rippled with muscle at his slightest move.

Kohler smiled and ducked out. So far as he could see, everything was just fine, like the little wrestler said.

It wasn't. It wasn't at all.

Luis Martinez, one of the Midwest's most popular matmen – and one of the most talented in the world – continued lacing his shoes. He had nothing on his mind at the moment, for he is not the brooding type. As he told us later, "I try to relax before a match. I don't want to – as prize fighters say – leave my fight in the dressing room. Oh, yes, little thoughts cross my mind. I think a little about my pretty wife, Delores, and about my children. I think about whether my son will want to become a wrestler when he grows up. I hope not, although the choice will be his. I would rather he went into business.

Martinez as he looked after the hectic bout. He showered quickly and left the arena before reporters were able to interview him.

★

his mind.

place in Chicago

"Sometimes, if I don't know my opponent's style and we happen to be using the same dressing room, I will size him up. Sometimes you can tell more about a man when you see him relaxed than when you get into the ring with him."

Martinez, at the Marigold that night, turned to size up his opponent. He had never seen him before, but he knew him by reputation. He saw a huge man — nearly six and a half feet tall and weighing close to 300 pounds. He was an ominous figure and he had proved his destructiveness in a thousand hard-fought matches against top opposition. Martinez, at 5-8 and 210 pounds, looked like cannon fodder for the grim-visaged monster.

As Luis looked him over, the big man stood up. His ugly face became uglier as he scowled. His name was not "Rough" Morgan, but that's what we'll call him here. "What the hell are you looking at, Spic?" The words were spit out like bullets.

Luis Martinez didn't show it, but he was shocked. No one had ever spoken to him like that before. Most people liked him on sight, and the more they saw of him, the better they liked him. Maybe the man was joking.

"Sorry," Luis said, "I didn't know it would bother you. Forget it."

Morgan didn't forget it. He walked over and towered over Martinez threateningly. "You're not the first Mexican I've wrestled, chum, and I hope you're not the last. I like to make hash out of you guys. And I want you to think about it up there in the ring, so I'll tell you why. A couple of years ago I was touring Mexico. I think it stinks!"

Martinez, straining to control himself, said

calmly, "I am sorry you didn't like my country. Others have found it very, very nice and they always go back to visit again."

Morgan's face grew livid. He clenched and unclenched his hands. Obviously, no one had ever spoken to **him** like that. He growled, "I could tear you apart right here, but I'm not going to deprive the fans of the pleasure of seeing me do it. Tonight, Mexican, you're going to sleep in a hospital!" He strode out of the room, brushing by Martinez as he did, and knocking Luis off the bench on which he sat.

Martinez rose to his feet. On his once-pleasant face was a look few people had ever seen. Had Rough Morgan seen it, he might have thought twice about the fate he had planned for Luis.

The main event, that night, was a bloody thing. It is not known how many in the crowd suspected what was happening. There is a noticeable difference between two men engaged in a legitimate wrestling match, using their skill and speed, plus the expected and accepted amount of showmanship, and two men trying to cripple one another.

Morgan's dirty tactics were noticeable. He used every back-alley device in the book in an effort to maim his smaller apponent. Unfortunately, he had made the mistake of warning Martinez beforehand. The Mexican was prepared. When Morgan tried to break his jaw with an elbow smash, Luis just wasn't there. When he tried to gouge out his eyes, Luis seized his fingers in a grip of iron and Morgan had to snatch them away or have them broken. Before the big man could finish a crushing hold that would end in broken bones, he found himself clutching empty air as Martinez masterfully slipped free.

Luis waited until he was certain that Morgan meant what he had said. Until then he fought a defensive battle. Then, knowing that Morgan might eventually get in a lucky punch, which would pave the way for the promised hospital bed – or worse – Martinez shifted to the offensive.

The bout lasted only five minutes after that. It was five minutes of the most spectacular wrestling ever seen at historic Marigold. At once, Morgan knew he had made a bad mistake. Desperately, he sought to stave off the dreadful attack that seemed to come from every direction. He succeeded for a time, taking dreadful punishment. What he didn't know was that all he had to do was whisper an apology in Martinez' ear – and the attack would have ended. At least, its full fury would have ended. Luis would have been satisfied merely to have won a well-fought victory.

But Morgan's code of ethics could not imagine a gentleman like Luis Martinez. He judged others by his own despicable conduct. So he did not apologize.

As a result, he found himself locked in a painful toe hold. It was significant that Martinez, a master wrestler, should choose this classic hold to gain his victory. As Morgan hurled obscenities at his tormentor and beat on the canvas, Martinez gave a final yank on his foot. There was an audible snap and an animal scream.

The crowd suddenly hushed. Then, as Martinez rose, they burst into wild cheering. They sensed that something unusual had taken place – and they were with Luis all the way.

Rough Morgan spent the night in the hospital. They say he has not wrestled another Mexican since. As a matter of fact, he wasn't even wrestling a Mexican then. For Luis Martinez has been an American citizen since 1946. The joke was on Morgan!

Here is something else that Morgan may be learning for the first time: Martinez himself does not not even like to wrestle in Mexico.

"The Mexican public treats foreign wrestlers better than they do their own," he says more in sorrow than in anger. It's understandable, I suppose. In the United States, it is well known that people prefer imported wines, imported fabrics, imported actors, imported everything. There is something more appealing about a thing that comes from far away. This does not always mean it's better. Mexicans are the same way."

Luis has another confession. "I don't like Mexican food." This is heresy. It's like a Swede saying he doesn't like Smorgasbord or an Italian turning up his nose at spaghetti. But Martinez has a good reason.

"I'm a physical culturist," he says. "In 1950 I was voted Mr. Mexico because of my physique. The only way to acquire this kind of body is through hard work with the weights. It's pretty tough to work out properly on a diet of beans and pancakes – **frijoles and tortillas.** You need plenty of good thick steak, potatoes and milk. In between, for a light lunch, Mexican food is fine."

By now you know that Luis Martinez is an unusual man in many ways. Here are some of the less usual things about him, the things that bring him down to the level of ordinary humans. For example, he likes bull fighting, but never entertained the idea of becoming a matador himself. "The kind of exercise I liked made me too husky. Matadors must be slim and wiry. I was not satisfied to look like that. More important, I dislike mistreating animals. Or people, for that matter."

After his wrestling days are over, and that eventually is not yet in sight, Martinez intends to make the most of his excellent education. At the University of Leon he majored in languages and mastered, among others, English, French, German, Italian and Dutch. He is also well qualified as a business administrator.

"A wrestler who can do other things is lucky," mused Martinez. It gives him a chance to live two different lives. A wrestling career, you know, is a life in itself. When a successful wrestler retires he is usually healthier than other men who are years younger. He can live another lifetime."

In winding up an interview with most wrestlers, we usually ask them for their philosophy of life – what they think about in their serious moments. We didn't have to ask Luis. He had already told us. Like everything else about Luis Martinez, his philosophy is a good one. ●

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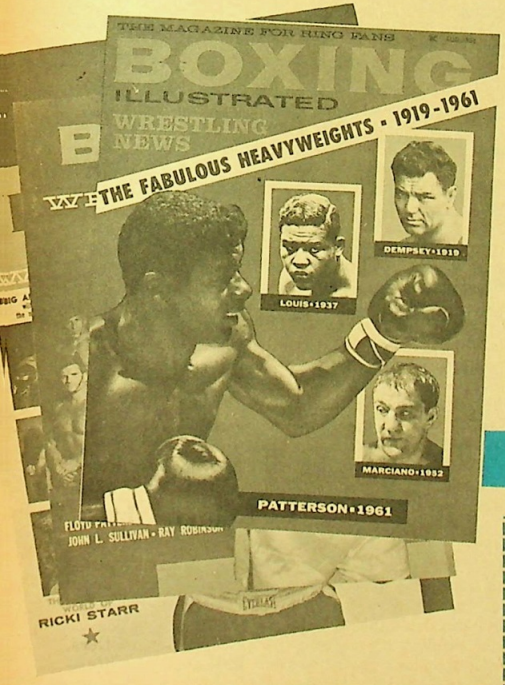

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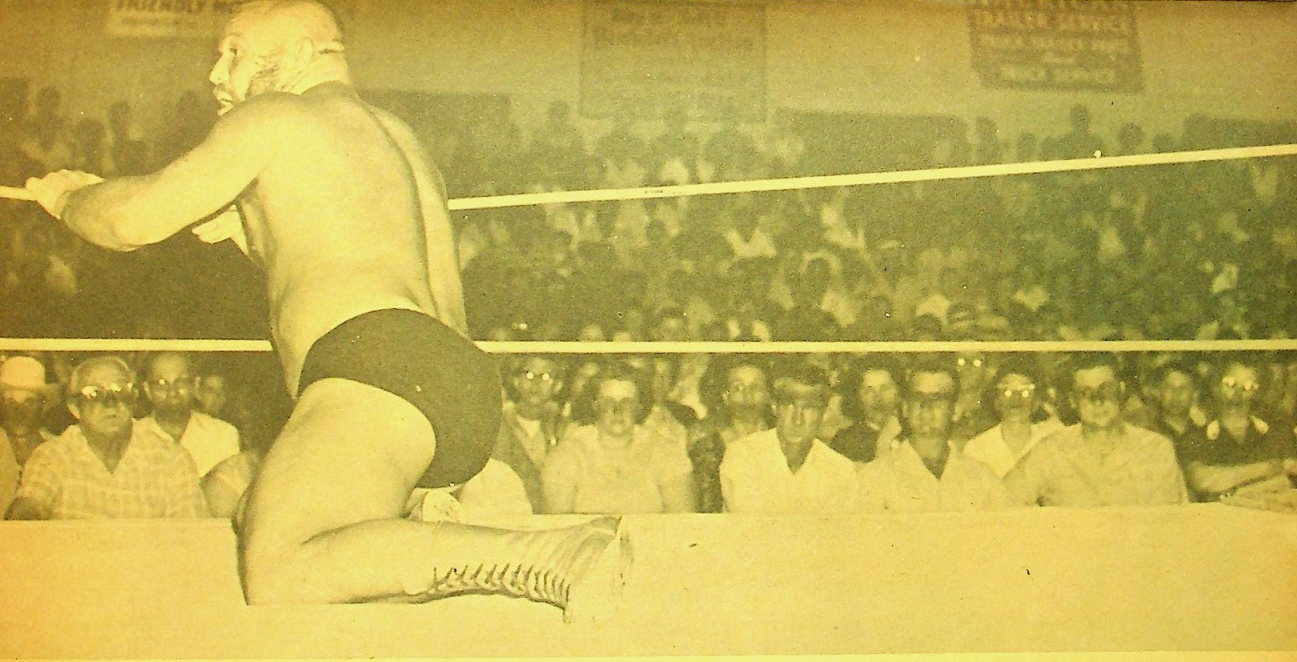
Leo Newman is suspended in cage hung over ring in Amarillo, Texas, while his boy, Tony Borne, crawls around on floor.



MANAGER IN A CAGE

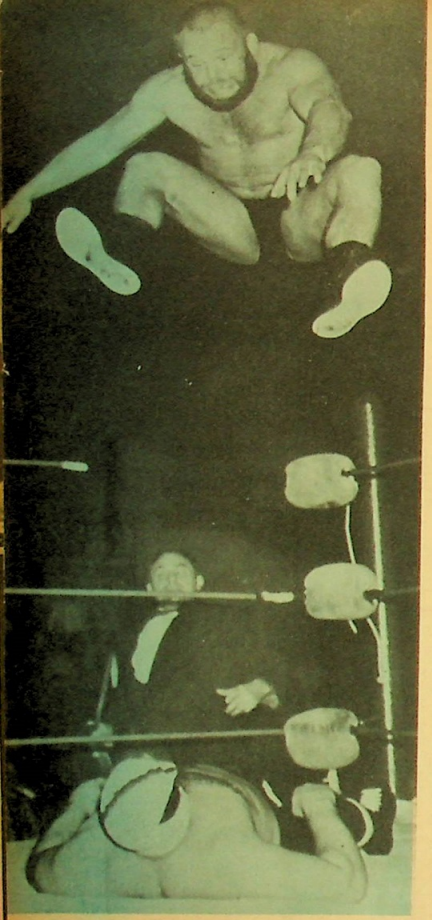
BY ALLEN RESSLER

SOME YEARS BACK, when Leo "The Lion Newman was one of the most feared villains in wrestling, he aroused the fury of a woman ringsider who screamed at him, "You beast — they should put you in a cage!" This expressed the way most people felt about The Lion at that time.

They finally got their wish. During a recent match in Amarillo, Texas, Leo the Lion was not only penned in a cage, he was suspended like a lionized canary from the ceiling of the auditorium. There, during the bout between tough Tony Borne and The Bat, Leo watched the action from behind bars, meanwhile hurling advice at his protege, Borne, and abuse at the Bat. As for the fans, they hurled cigarette butts and paper cups at Leo.

How it all came about — and how it finally turned out — is an example of why rasslin', Texas-style, furnishes more imagination, excitement and thrills than plain old ordinary wrestling elsewhere.

(continued on next page)



Manager Newman yells encouragement to Borne as Tony sets to land on The Bat.

Leo Newman is Tony Borne's manager, you see, and he has a habit of helping his man win by any means available — such as jabbing Tony's opponent with his cane, yanking him off his feet and blinding him wth his hat. His tactics became so unsportsmanlike that Amarillo officials decided he had to be controlled. What better way to control a "Lion" than to cage him? Leo was within his rights in giving advice to Tony, they figured, but he had to be restrained from bodily interfering with the contest.

So, came the night Borne wrestled the Bat — and to the delight of the fans, the Lion was caged and swung aloft. So long as Borne was winning, all went well. Leo did nothing but roar and claw at his bars.

But then, half way through the bout, the Bat flapped his wings and sailed into Tony like an angry eagle. He won the second fall. At once, Leo bared his fangs — or his hack saw, which he'd brought along for such an emergency. He whipped the saw from a pocket and cut his way out of the cage. Then he removed a nylon rope ladder, which he'd wrapped around his waist, and climbed down into the ring!

Pandemonium raged, not to mention chaos and bedlam! The fans, laughing and jeering at the same time, didn't know whether to protest or encourage the resourceful Leo. Before they could make up their minds, Leo had helped Tony clip the Bat's wings; to wit, beat him to a pulp. The officials finally got Leo out of the ring so that the match could proceed, but by then it was too late — the Bat was grounded for the night. Tony won the third fall.

As for Leo the Lion, he growled, "There's no wrestler good enough to lick my Tony — and no cage strong enough to hold me! Let 'em try!"

But the Amarillo folk have the answer, they think. For Tony's next match, they're importing a new referee, one who can handle both Tony *and* Leo — or any other lion: Clyde Beatty, the world's greatest lion tamer! ●

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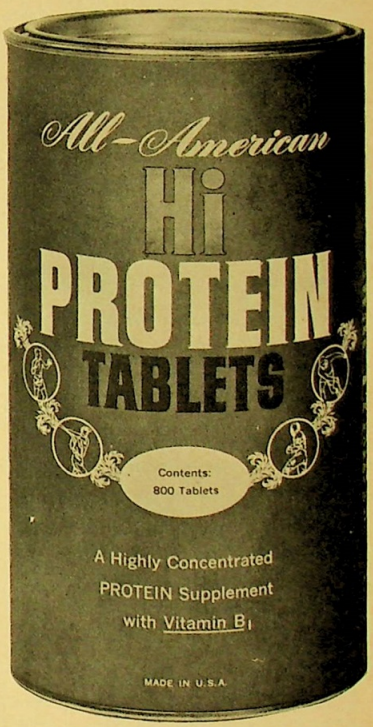

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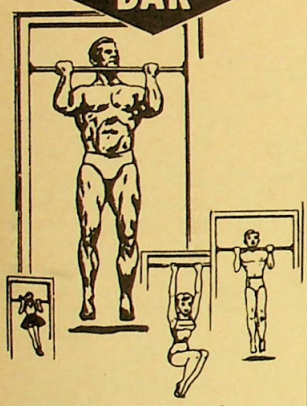

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WILBUR SNYDER

(*continued from page* 16)

tler would simply drop down, yank him off the floor, apply his favorite hold – mine's the Cobra Twist – and that would be all for Mr. Patterson."

"All right," we said, "let's try something else. Many great athletes go in for rough competitive sports just to prove something. You know, they had a rough childhood or polio or some other handicap and were determined to make men of themselves. If we could only say something like that –"

"Nope." Wilbur shook his head. "I took up wrestling only because there's more money in it than in football. I played with the Rams in 1952, the year they were national champions. Then I joined the Edmonton Eskimos of the Canadian League. There I got $8,000 a year. When I was offered $10,000 in 1954 I had to make my decision. I chose wrestling."

"Why wrestling at that particular time?"

"Because I made $25,000 that same year, wrestling. It was pretty conclusive."

Since neither Wilbur nor we could think of a way to begin this story, we decided to start in the middle. "We have your early background and the fact that you chose wrestling over football because of the money," we said. "Let's find out now what happened during your early years in wrestling."

It started in college, Wilbur told us, at the University of Utah. "To get myself in shape for football, I joined the colle[illegible]restling team. After a whi[illegible]d myself playing football s[illegible]d get in shape for wrestli[illegible] was in 1948-194[illegible] wres[illegible] Leg[illegible] to [illegible] went [illegible] suppose, [illegible] modest, I could say that I finally chose wrestling because I wasn't such a hot football player. I'd rather say I was a **better** wrestler than a football player. When you like two things and try to do them both at once, one has to suffer.

Has he ever regretted the switch?

"No, wrestling has been awfully good to me. I was able to buy a nice home in Van Nuys for my family and all the good things of life. Shirley and I have two wonderful children, Cindy, who's ten, and Mike, 12. I don't get home as often as I'd like, but I try harder than most married wrestlers, I suppose. And by trying you can do wonders. We have a good family life."

It was noticeable in Wilbur Snyder that he doesn't go in for superlatives like "greatest" and "terrific." His home is "nice" and his family life is "good". Coming from a guy like Wilbur you know that he means the home is extraordinary and that his family life is tops. Just another mark of character – and Snyder's character is of the highest.

The best way to find out about a wrestler is to talk about him in confidence with other wrestlers. The following is not in confidence: Al Costello, one of the villainous Kangaroos, says of Snyder, "As a wrestler, he's one of the best. As a man, that goes double! In the ring, I might try to wreck him – that's my job – but outside, he can borrow my right arm. Not that he needs it."

All of the other comments we got were on the same order. They only substantiated our own opinion of him.

Our opinion of his wrestling ability needs no substantiation. He's one of the best, as Costello says. As usual, the early amateur training, coupled with his knowledge of professional tricks—added to his size and the natural toughness developed on the pro gridiron – it all makes for a "complete" wrestler of the Lou Thesz-Verne Gagne type. Wilbur knew he had arrived, as a matter of fact, when [illegible] met Thesz in 1956. It was his [illegible]h year in wrestling and he had successfully passed through the rugged apprenticeship necessary before stardom.

"I'd been making a name for

myself on the Coast," he says, "but was more or less unknown elsewhere. I stayed in California to be near my family. But I knew that I would never hit the top staying in one place. So I came to the Midwest. It was the best move I'd made in six years."

The move was to Chicago. Four months after an unheralded arrival, he had beaten "Wild Bill" Longson, The Mighty Atlas and Hans Hermann, top-notchers all. His biggest thrill during that period was holding Lou Thesz to a draw. The Thesz match was a fateful accident of circumstances.

Actually, Thesz was slated to wrestle the Sheik on that particular night, in Chicago's Marigold Garden. At the last minute the Sheik was tossed by his doctor, who said that he woud be risking permanent injury if he tried to wrestle. He had suffered a crippling leg injury in a previous bout. As it happened, Wilbur Snyder was champing at the bit in the dressing room, disappointed that he hadn't been put on the card.

Fred Kohler, the astute promoter, put him on. In the last-minute hurry, they neglected to notify Thesz of the change. So, when Thesz turned around after entering the ring, he saw young Snyder climbing through the ropes. He let out a roar.

"Hold it!" shouted Lou, "I was matched with the Sheik. I was trained for his style and I'm mentally geared to wrestle him tonight. This fellow wrestles entirely different. Get him out of here!"

Promoter Kohler leaped into the ring. He could see a great match slipping down the drain. It took him a long time, but he finally persuaded Thesz to reconsider. The great ex-champion agreed to wrestle someone he knew nothing about. He asked, however, that the match time be reduced from an hour to only thirty minutes.

It was a hectic half hour. Neither man could win a fall, attesting to their equal prowess. Their speed was blinding, their power awesome.

When the bout ended at the thirty-minute bell, the crowd rose to cheer both wrestlers. Neither lost prestige by the decision—and for Wilbur Snyder, it was more important than any of his other victories. From then on he was recognized as a star, and his light has been glowing ever since. As of now he is one of the top contenders for Buddy Rogers' world title. There is only one step more to go. Wilbur thinks he'll make it; but, in keeping with his natural modesty, he does not make any flamboyant claims.

"There's plenty of time," he said as we neared the end of this exclusive interview. "I expect to be wrestling for at least another half dozen years. If I were unhappy in this business, I might be impatient. But I like what I'm doing. I can wait."

Sooner or later, we said, all wrestlers climb through the ropes for the last time. Then they have to think about what they'll do with the rest of their life. The aggressive ones who know no other business go into promoting or allied fields. Others live off their real estate holdings while basking in the Florida sun. Others open a bar or a bowling alley. What about Wilbur Snyder?"

"I have a slight advantage over some of the fellows," he admits. "I've got a college education. Also, I can open a real estate brokerage anytime I like. Moreover, I haven't exactly wasted the money I've earned in ten years of pro wrestling. The fact is, I'll be in a pretty enviable position when I retire. Chances are I'll get a ranch in California and breed thoroughbred cattle, maybe horses, too. I want to do something I've never tried before. I want to keep on enjoying life – and I hate drudgery. I'll probably make up my mind the day after my last bout. Like I said, there's no hurry."

As we came to the close of our enjoyable hour, we smiled. "Well, Wilbur, maybe we couldn't think of a good beginning to our story – but we've sure got a happy ending."

"That," said America's most popular wrestler, "is what counts. Look at the monarch butterfly – he starts off as a shapeless, ugly little blob of unpleasantness. But look how he ends up!"

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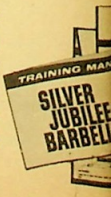

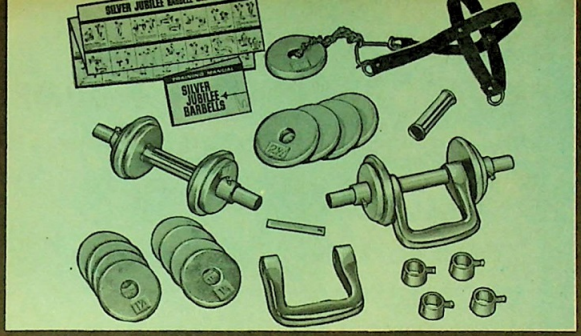

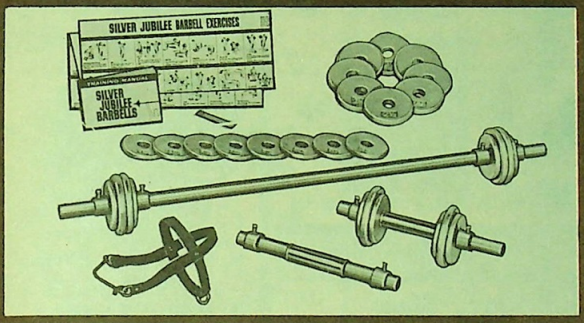

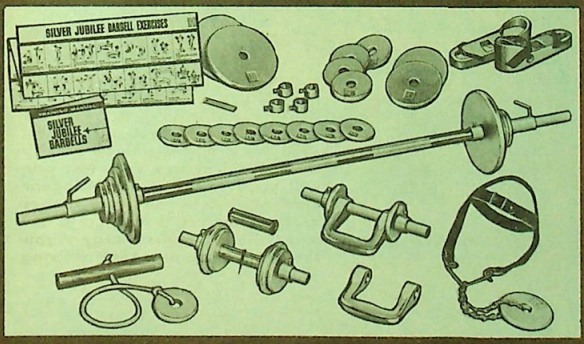

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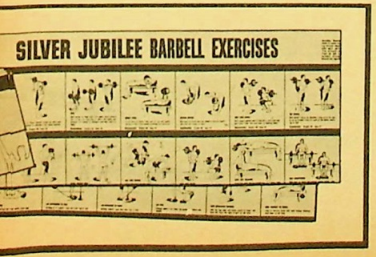

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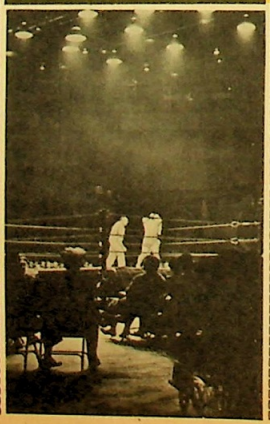

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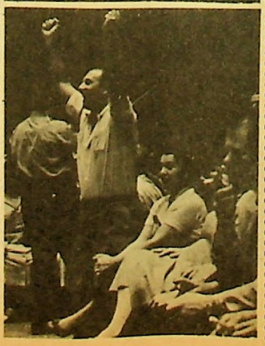

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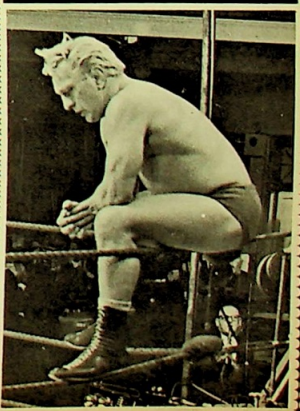

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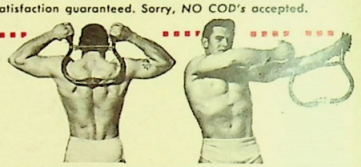

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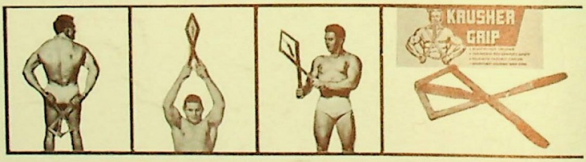

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